BCCI SUCKERS: A GUIDE, BY MICHAEL LEWIS

JUNE 21, 1993 · $2.95

THE NEW REPUBLIC

Why Clinton Hates The Press
Fred Barnes

Why The Press Hates Clinton
Mickey Kaus

Our Cynical Media
James Q. Wilson

The Lies Journalists Tell
Katherine Dunn

The Real AIDS Cure
Malcolm Gladwell

Balkan Pornography
Slavenka Drakulić

Christine Stansell on Margaret Fuller

Wendy Lesser on Walter Abish

SEAMUS HEANEY ON MINT

• • • • •

ANDREW SULLIVAN ON CLINTON

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

This is my Daddy.
our house
me
Joe across the street
My Mommy knows the words to every song she taught me how to do the hustle on the Porch.
Every night he loses his glasses and Mommy turns around and tells him that they're on his head.
zuzu
new baby

When Lisa was born
ıer kidneys didn't work.
we helped Lisa's mother
learn to care for her.

It saved $200,000
in hospital costs.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Aetna's Individual Case Managers help people who are in our group plans receive proper health care. They help to find the best available treatment by understanding people's needs and by working with their doctors. In many cases, by discovering alternative methods for treatment, medical costs are reduced. And more importantly, people can recover in a somewhat more comfortable environment. Like home, for instance. With family.

Aetna. A policy to do more.™

Aetna

© 1992 Aetna Life and Casualty Company

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

TRB®

FROM WASHINGTON

Tribal hatred

I confess I'm one of those who expected the press to swoon over President Clinton. Reporters are (let's admit it) mostly Democrats. They were bored to death with Bush. They seemed all too ready for a Kennedyesque leader to seduce them with flattery and inside access. Clinton is good at that sort of thing, right? The only problem, I figured, was that he wouldn't have time to suckle them all.

Boy was I wrong. After the May meltdown in press/president relations I conducted an informal, off-the-record survey of reporters who cover the president. Do they like him? Most were naturally reluctant to answer. They are journalists, they noted. They have a job to do. They don't let their emotions get in the way. Yes, of course. But what are the emotions that don't get in the way? *Do they like him?* Slowly at first, then more forcefully, then with some passion, the answer usually came bubbling up. No.

Why? There appear to be a great many explanations. You could get tenure by cataloging them all. Many are anthropological. "The press," for these purposes, can be broken down into a number of tribes. The first tribe includes those reporters who covered Clinton during the campaign and graduated to cover his administration. This is a youngish group. They may be susceptible to a perverse generational pique. As Walter Shapiro of *Esquire* notes, Clinton's age makes it easier for baby boomers to indulge in the ambient Washington fantasy—"If I were president"—and to conclude that they would do better than he's doing. Above all, though, this group is distressed that it has lost the access to Clinton that it enjoyed during the campaign, in the bus trip days. Their anecdotes are getting stale.

Most of the reporters who assemble in the White House briefing room, however, didn't cover Clinton's campaign. They are holdovers from the Bush—and earlier—White Houses. Many feel the Clinton campaign reporters were too soft on him. These White House veterans never had any Clinton anecdotes, and they don't seem likely to get any. Indeed, with Clinton's election, it became much harder for them to earn a living off their bit of journalistic turf. Communications director George Stephanopoulos's briefings were unhelpful, and he'd blocked off their access to his office. Was Clinton going to meet with their town's mayor next week? They couldn't find out. "If they didn't get fed, they were going to eat something else," observes one reporter.

Finally, there is the T.V. network tribe. The Clintonians haven't been so stupid as to ignore *them.* But their cameramen have complained of being pushed, shoved and generally bossed around by Clinton punks. Particularly demeaning is the system devised to keep the cameramen under control when they are following Clinton's unpredictable movements. It consists of two yellow ropes, held by Clinton aides. The cameramen must stay between the ropes, which the aides yank and pull, herding them like cattle.

Embattled Clinton officials will readily note their slightings of the journalistic tribes. *That's* why the president gets such bad press, they imply—it's all these selfish, arcane, institutional grievances. Even so, it was pretty dumb for the Clintonites to inflame those grievances. And when you ask reporters themselves, you come up with a different, equally plausible list of explanations that have less to do with the press than the president. I'll mention only four complaints.

First, Clinton is inconsiderate. Explaining his famous Air Force One haircut, Clinton said he didn't know his plane was holding up other travelers at LAX. "I'd never do that," he explained. But reporters know he does it all the time. His campaign was habitually late, often requiring audiences to wait for hours. Even as president, he makes kids shiver waiting for him in the White House Rose Garden. He makes his traveling party wait, after Air Force One arrives home in Washington, until he has finished his dinner on the plane. Reporters have seen all this, and note that Clinton seems oblivious to the inconvenience caused. That's why the haircut story got played up.

Second is what might be called the problem of overspin. Clinton's aides appear to have been spinning since they learned to talk. They spun their way out of the Gennifer Flowers mess, and must feel they can spin their way out of anything. By now, it's second nature for them to give the world the shape they think it ought to have. So if some people at the travel office have been fired, Press Secretary Dee Dee Myers says it's all part of Al Gore's government efficiency project. When the fired employees are reinstated, Stephanopoulos says they were never fired. The only problem is these things are fantasies. "They don't know the difference between truth and lies," complains a White House reporter. They also don't know that the lies a candidate can get away with a president can't.

Third is a hypercritical attitude toward ordinary press behavior. When Hillary Clinton's father died, the press "travel pool" was banned from the services in Little Rock. But the event was open to the public, and attended by hundreds. Richard Berke of *The New York Times,* who wasn't part of the "pool," attended and wrote a short, respectful story. White House aides—both Hillary's and Bill's—went ballistic with their complaints.

All political staffs complain about stories. But Clinton staffers appear to have an exceptionally low threshold of tolerance. "Why are you doing another story on this?" they ask. Why didn't you cover the motor voter signing? You've damaged yourself at the White House. Don't expect to get that interview. The most damning thing about these attempts at bullying is that they are naive. They don't work. They only goad reporters on. Smart pols know that.

The hair-trigger complaints also reflect a strange, self-pitying myopia that seems to start with Clinton himself. Why, after all, has he failed to schmooze and flatter the White House press? George Bush invited reporters upstairs to see movies. He took reporters' kids out on his boat. But key wire service reporters have never met Clinton socially. Sucking up to the press doesn't ensure favorable coverage. (It didn't save Bush.) But it helps. A bit of sucking up—or down—would be in Clinton's self-interest. Why hasn't he done it? The answer, as Fred Barnes points out (see "Press Gang," page 15), seems to be that Clinton genuinely doesn't like reporters. No wonder some of them are acting like spurned lovers. Clinton grew aloof from the press during the campaign, when he felt he had been burned by the coverage of the draft issue.

How bizarre. The press *saved* Clinton during the campaign. I should think he'd be permanently grateful to reporters simply for ignoring the Gennifer Flowers tape. Instead, he feels victimized. It's hard to imagine, say, JFK being so deluded. Do the Clintons feel their acts and statements should go unquestioned because their motives are noble? There are few surer ways to get bad press.

MICKEY KAUS

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE NEW REPUBLIC

A Weekly Journal of Opinion

JUNE 21, 1993

FOUNDED 1914
WASHINGTON, D.C.
ISSUE 4,092

Editor-in-Chief and Chairman
MARTIN PERETZ

Editor
ANDREW SULLIVAN

Literary Editor
LEON WIESELTIER

Executive Editor
DAVID SHIPLEY

Senior Editors
FRED BARNES, ANN HULBERT, MICKEY KAUS, MICHAEL KINSLEY, MICHAEL LEWIS, JACOB WEISBERG, ROBERT WRIGHT

Managing Editor
WESTON KOSOVA

Editor, New Republic Books (Basic Books)
PETER EDIDIN

Films
STANLEY KAUFFMANN

Theater
ROBERT BRUSTEIN

Poetry
MARY JO SALTER

Art
MARK STEVENS

Legal Affairs
JEFFREY ROSEN

Contributing Editors
ELIOT A. COHEN, ROBERT COLES, STANLEY CROUCH, JAMES K. GLASSMAN, ANNA HUSARSKA, JOHN B. JUDIS, MORTON KONDRACKE, CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER, VINT LAWRENCE, LOUIS MENAND, ADAM MICHNIK, JONATHAN RIEDER, ROGER ROSENBLATT, MAGGIE SCARF, ROBERT SHAPIRO, RONALD STEEL, E.V. THAW, TOM TOLES, TATYANA TOLSTAYA, MICHAEL WALZER, DOROTHY WICKENDEN, C. VANN WOODWARD

Associate Managing Editor
LEONA HIRAOKA

Design Coordinator
ERIC BAKER

Editorial-Corporate Coordinator
LAURA E. OBOLENSKY

Assistant to the Editors
JUNE HALEY

Assistant Literary Editor
ALEXANDER STAR

Production Director
BRUCE STEINKE

Assistant Production Manager
ANGELINA HAN

Copy Editor
AMYE. KNOX

Reporter-Researchers
GARY J. BASS, ERIC KONIGSBERG, STEPHEN RODRICK, RUTH SHALIT

President
JEFFREY L. DEARTH

Publisher
JOAN M. STAPLETON

Associate Publisher-Marketing
PAUL J. VIZZA

Associate Publisher-Circulation
PEGGY JARVIS FERRIN

Controller
JEAN GANDY

Acting Advertising Director
LISA THOMAS

Director of Joint Advertising Sales
JAMES J. McCABE

Accounting Manager
CHRISTINA R. OVERHOLSER

Circulation Manager
CECELIA M. STEPHENS

Advertising Assistant
DIANE M. SEBOLD

Accounting Assistant
JACQUELYN M. PASCALE

Back Issues and Reception
CAROLYN PARHAM

Cover by Eric Baker for THE NEW REPUBLIC. Articles passim. Illustration on page 26 by Jim Holloway.

4 **MICKEY KAUS** TRB: TRIBAL HATRED How come the press doesn't like Bill?

6 **CORRESPONDENCE** Feedback from the information highway &c.

9 **THE EDITORS** ENERGY TAXES, PLEASE The case for Clinton's original plan.

10 **NOTEBOOK** Benazir Bhutto's democratic doubts, David Gergen's Republicanism &c.

11 **AIRMAN CHARLES E. VINS** UNSAFE HAVEN The testimony of an accomplice to murder.

12 **SLAVENKA DRAKULIĆ** DEATH, LIVE The Balkans on cable.

14 **JEFFREY ROSEN** COURT WATCH: COURT MARSHALL All the Marshall papers reveal is how dysfunctional the Rehnquist Court really is.

15 **FRED BARNES** WHITE HOUSE WATCH: PRESS GANG Clinton's media-phobia.

16 **GARY J. BASS** PERK PRINCE Clinton a luxurious wastrel? Try Reagan and Bush.

18 **KATHERINE DUNN** FIBBERS Why do the media good guys tell such whoppers?

19 **YOSSI KLEIN HALEVI** THE SAVIOR How Bibi Netanyahu salvaged the Israeli right.

21 **MALCOLM GLADWELL** ONLY SELECT Over a decade into the AIDS epidemic, our public health policy has still not focused on the inner city. Why a selective strategy—and not another p.r. campaign—would save more lives and waste less money.

28 **STANLEY KAUFFMANN** ON FILMS: STRIP POKER The strange harmony of *The Music of Chance.*

29 **ROBERT BRUSTEIN** ON THEATER: RETURN OF THE MASTER Ingmar Bergman's inspired visions of *Peer Gynt* and *Madame de Sade.*

30 **JAMES Q. WILSON** STAGESTRUCK *Picture Perfect: The Art and Artifice of Public Image Making* by Kiku Adatto

36 **MICHAEL LEWIS** TAKE THE MONEY AND RUN *The Outlaw Bank: A Wild Ride into the Secret Heart of BCCI* by Jonathan Beaty and S. C. Gwynne; *False Profits: The Inside Story of BCCI* by Peter Truell and Larry Gurwin

40 **CHRISTINE STANSELL** NEW ENGLAND SPHINX *Margaret Fuller: An American Romantic Life—The Private Years* by Charles Capper

44 **WENDY LESSER** SHADOW PLAYS *Eclipse Fever* by Walter Abish

45 **SEAMUS HEANEY** POEM *Mint*

46 **ANDREW SULLIVAN** WASHINGTON DIARIST: REGRET

THE NEW REPUBLIC, Vol. 208, Number 25, Issue 4,092, June 21, 1993. (Printed in the U.S. on June 2, 1993.) Published weekly (except for combined issues dated Jan. 4 & 11, July 19 & 26, Aug. 23 & 30, and Sept. 20 & 27, 1993) at 1220 19th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036. Telephone (202) 331-7494. The New Republic/National Review joint advertising (212) 702-4882. Yearly subscriptions, $69.97; foreign, $99.97; Canada, $84.97. Back issues, $3.50 (includes postage & handling). © 1993 by The New Republic, Inc. (ISSN 0028-6583). Second-class postage paid at Washington, DC, and additional mailing offices. Indexed in Readers' Guide, Media Review Digest, Microform, CD-ROM, issue and article copies are available through University Microfilms Intnl., 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Telephone 1-800-521-0600. Internet mail address: TNR@aol.com. Member, Audit Bureau of Circulations. Unsolicited manuscripts can be returned only if accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Subscribers: Please send all remittances, changes of address, and subscription inquiries to Subscription Service Dept., The New Republic, P.O. Box 602, Mount Morris, IL 61054. For subscription problems call 800-827-1289.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CORRESPONDENCE

Gigabytten

To the editors:

Robert Wright's cautions about the malignant implications of Mitch Kapor's fiber-optic superhighway ring hollow in the face of his unconcealed infatuation with its magical possibilities ("The New Democrat from Cyberspace," May 24). "'Consumer choice' isn't the half of it," he gushes; the Electronic Frontier Foundation's vision of "a gigabyte in every pot" is downright Jeffersonian. A meta-network of information with tentacles reaching into every home will "empower" people by giving them access to the information that, after all, is the "sine qua non of prosperity" today. (Never mind that "prosperity" has never been the defining feature of democracy for any democratic theorist worth his salt—and certainly not for Jefferson.) In Wright's dazzled imagination, as in his guru Kapor's, "friendships blossom, clubs form, debates rage"—a nationwide fiber grid promises a miraculous revitalization of democratic culture.

So far, the result of the "information explosion" has been just the opposite: the "expertization" of knowledge, the desiccation of public debate and the attenuation of civic life. Wright dismisses fears of a "nightmare scenario" of passive consumption taken to new heights as the backward paranoia of those who just don't know any better than stupidly to resist the inevitable triumph of the high-tech revolution. Poor, misty-eyed romantics, they probably still cling to such antiquated practices as reading books printed on actual paper and engaging in oral speech in face-to-face contact. As if such things necessarily had anything to do with meaningful public life.

Well, there have always been naysayers; but don't worry, history is on Kapor's side. It won't be long before they—or at least their offspring—will take their places with the faceless millions that his vision requires, each at his own personal computer in his own isolated cell, networking away on E-mail, "joining in discussions—whether in 'real time' or on bulletin boards . . . ."

Gigabyte yourself.

SUZANNE WOLK
Rochester, New York

To the editors:

Since I am described as a critic of Mitch Kapor's Electronic Frontier Foundation, allow me to clarify our view on EFF and the regulatory issues facing the emerging telecommunications infrastructure. I have mixed feelings about EFF. Many are supportive of its contributions to discussions regarding certain privacy and First Amendment issues but wary of its positions on common carrier regulation, in part because of the hefty funding EFF receives from the telephone, cable and electronic publishing industries. EFF's argument that these groups have conflicting interests and therefore cancel out each other is at best naive.

Broadcast television and radio, cable television, telephone service, wireless communications including cellular telephones and the Internet all have vastly different regulatory and funding issues. The convergence of these technologies raises difficult questions concerning competition, common carrier regulation and a variety of public interest objectives. If video programming is transmitted over local fiber networks, should there be a new "fiber" version of the equal time or fairness doctrines for network providers? Should network providers be allowed to own programming content, as is the current case for broadcast and cable? Should they be required to support educational or public service programming? How many local network providers constitute effective competition? To my knowledge, EFF hasn't begun to address these issues in any detail, despite the impressive resources they have devoted to the infrastructure debate.

The real issue is who will own and control access to the emerging telecommunications infrastructure, and what will be the new regulatory framework. Many persons ("new" and "old" Democrats, as well as Republicans) are alarmed at the increasing pace of concentration in the ownership of this infrastructure. Video and data markets will be competitive only if regulatory issues concerning market entry, cross-ownership and vertical integration are resolved properly. EFF will never make valuable contributions to debates over these issues unless it is willing to take positions that alienate many of the firms and trade associations that provide its funding.

JAMES LOVE
Center for Study of Responsive Law
Washington, D.C.
Via America On-Line

Unacquainted

To the editors:

I'm not sure whom to thank for Alejandro Portes's characterization of my book, *Mexican Americans: The Ambivalent Minority*, as "a well-documented and well-reasoned essay," since he seems unac-

John Dubrow

Recent Paintings • June 8 to July 3

The artist is exclusively represented by

Salander-O'Reilly Galleries

20 East 79 Street New York, NY 10021

Tel (212) 879-6606 Fax (212) 744-0655

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

quainted with my argument ("The Longest Migration," April 26). Portes praises my critique of foundation-supported, Washington-oriented Mexican-American elites but accuses me of ignoring "sociological realities on the ground." Yet two-thirds of my book is an analysis of how local socioeconomic conditions and political institutions have shaped Mexican-American politics differently in San Antonio and Los Angeles.

Portes states that I offer "little analysis of the objective conditions" forming Mexican-American identities. But my study, based on two years of field work, reveals a paradox: in Texas, where Mexican-Americans have experienced virtual caste status, they have successfully engaged in something akin to classic immigrant ethnic group politics; in California, where they have enjoyed greater social and economic mobility, they have been less successful and resorted to angry, racial claimant politics.

I call Mexican-Americans "ambivalent" because their complicated history keeps them from fitting neatly into either the racial-minority category or the ethnic-immigrant category. Would that I could as easily account for Portes's bizarre misreading of my book.

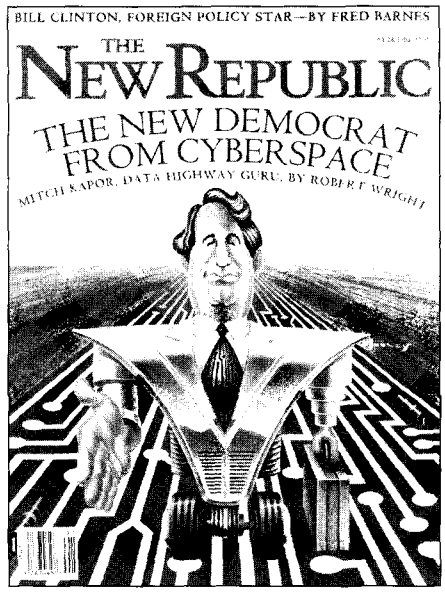
PETER SKERRY
Los Angeles, California

Love and war

To the editors:

John Boswell made a number of errors and omissions in his discussion of gay soldiers in history ("Battle Worn," May 10). A particularly absurd statement—"Richard LionHeart and Philip II of France, noted warriors of the twelfth century, were lovers and went on crusade together"—demonstrates his cavalier approach to historical accuracy. First, Richard and Philip were not lovers, as recent biographies such as Antony Bridge's *Richard the LionHeart* clearly demonstrate. That rumor was based primarily on the fact that they had once "shared a bed"—not an uncommon thing for ancient and medieval heterosexuals or family members to do, given the paucity of comfortable sleeping quarters. Richard had gargantuan sexual appetites, for which he was severely chastised by clergymen, but there is no evidence he was homosexual. Second, Philip was hardly a "noted warrior," but was in fact a weak and cowardly—albeit crafty—king. Finally, their going "on crusade together" reflected not amorous or even friendly relations, but instead mutual distrust. Richard and Philip were bitter enemies virtually all of their lives and did not trust each other to refrain from invasion during the crusade. Indeed, Richard was right not to trust Philip, as the latter returned early and promptly attacked Richard's holdings in France.

The biggest problem with Boswell's argument is that he provides opponents of gays in the military with evidence supporting their contention that openly gay soldiers, developing homosexual relationships with their peers, would destroy discipline and unit cohesion. Consider Achilles, who ventured forth to fight Hector only after the latter killed Achilles' lover, Patroclus—hardly reflecting sound military judgment. Other ancient lovers Boswell cites made similar judgments in battle based on love rather than good sense, and he himself notes "an explicit parallel to a wife's being willing to die for her husband." That's most assuredly not the basis for military success. Perhaps for


BILL CLINTON, FOREIGN POLICY STAR—BY FRED BARNES
THE
NEW REPUBLIC
THE NEW DEMOCRAT FROM CYBERSPACE
MITCH KAPOR, DATA HIGHWAY GURU, BY ROBERT WRIGHT

ancient and medieval armies these failures in discipline didn't matter much. But in the modern army, where split-second decisions abound, misplaced sacrificial heroism can be fatal.

JOHN M. HOOD
Raleigh, North Carolina

To the editors:

I have been amused to see passages from Plato show up in TNR as supporting evidence for *both* sides of the debate over gays in the military. The most recent case is John Boswell's "Battle-Worn" (see also "Love Field" by Paul W. Kahn, March 8), and the (very) selective use of one Platonic text, the *Symposium*, is misleading at best.

The *Symposium* consists of a collection of speeches in praise of Eros by different members of an Athenian dinner party. Which, if any, ultimately represents Plato's view is perhaps impossible to say, but there is a great deal of internal evidence that those of Phaedrus and Aristophanes do not. Boswell first quotes some approving words attributed to Phaedrus concerning the desirability of forming an army composed entirely of homosexual lovers. The reference is clearly to just such a unit, the Sacred Band of Thebes, organized in 378 BCE. This fact, among others, helps us date the dialogue *after* that point in time, not "some twenty years earlier," as Boswell writes.

Boswell also cites the words that Plato "put in the mouth of Aristophanes ... that those males who preferred other males and 'delight to lie with them and to be clasped in men's embraces ... are the finest boys and young men, for they have the most manly nature.'" But soon after Plato has Socrates explicitly reject the theory of which those words are a part. In the *Laws*, Plato has the Athenian Visitor endorse the idea that society should follow the "law of nature" and legislate against the "sterile and unnatural intercourse among males."

I do not mean to suggest that Plato was not a homosexual (or, for that matter, that he was), or to enlist him in the opposition to gays in the military. But Plato's writings on homosexuality are not unambiguous, and *his* feelings on the matter are unclear. The misappropriation of him by either side in the present debate is neither honest nor very helpful.

KIRK R. SANDERS
Austin, Texas

Tips

To the editors:

This is getting painful. In his response to my letter to the editor (Correspondence, May 24), Jacob Weisberg wrote:

> A reliable source tells me that Russert, too, received early information about [Kimba] Wood from his friend [Michael] Kramer. That is actually consistent with a close reading of his letter; perhaps Russert passed the tip to Andrea Mitchell, who then "got the story" from an administration official, or perhaps Mitchell got it independently. It doesn't mean Russert didn't hear from Kramer.

Sorry, but that theory is as incorrect as the first one put forward by Weisberg. The facts are simple. I did not pass any tip to Andrea Mitchell because I did not "hear from Kramer" or, for that matter, anyone else. Frankly, from a personal and professional standpoint, I wish I could share credit for the scoop, but Andrea got it without any assistance from me. None of this is difficult to confirm. I suggest that before Weisberg floats a third theory, he simply call me and Andrea Mitchell for the facts, thus avoiding yet a third mistake.

TIMOTHY J. RUSSERT
NBC News
Washington, D.C.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Where We Stand

By Albert Shanker, President
American Federation of Teachers

Opportunity to Learn

Just as we were about to straighten out our educational system, some members of Congress and the education community have been talking up a hot, new idea that could torpedo needed school reforms. The reforms would create a system similar to the one common to other industrial countries that outperform us. It includes defining what students should know and be able to do (content standards); assessments that tell us who is or isn't making it; and consequences. The last are designed to get students to work as hard as they do in other countries because they know something important—like college admission or access to a good job—is at stake.

As soon as these proposals emerged, the issue of fairness was raised. Is it fair to attach high stakes to students' achievement if all youngsters have not had the same opportunity to learn? Some students have good textbooks and materials while others have poor ones or none at all. Some schools have a computer for every student while others don't. Some schools have qualified math and science teachers; others have teachers forced to teach a subject in which they have little competence. As we move toward higher standards, the effects of school differences on student learning will become even greater than they are now.

The remedy being proposed is "opportunity-to-learn standards." They would be set by a group supported by the federal government, and they would define what conditions schools need to meet so that all students have a fair chance to learn. No question, there's a real issue here. If the new standards and assessments were put into place, and students in schools with many advantages made big gains while students lacking those supports made little or no progress, that would bring strong political pressure and legal action to provide the school conditions that matter in student learning—which would be all to the good.

But most supporters of opportunity-to-learn standards are saying something different. They argue that *until* and *unless* we achieve fairness in schooling, we should not make the new standards and assessments count for students. This sounds even more fair, but it is actually destructive and counterproductive. Let's take one example.

Why do we insist that schools follow ideas we reject everywhere else? We don't abolish medical school exams because not everyone has had the opportunity for top-notch pre-med education.

More than half of our math and science teachers are not licensed in those subjects. If we adopt new curricula based on higher standards, even some of our qualified teachers may have difficulty teaching them. So while some kids will have teachers who are qualified, many, perhaps even the majority, will not. What can we do about this now? Not much because we have not produced enough people with strong competence in these and other subjects to put one in each classroom. How could we when only about seven percent of students graduating from high school have mastered high school math? And you can be sure that most of them are headed toward elite colleges to prepare for high-paying professions—not teaching. So if we hold up putting new standards, assessments and stakes into place until we have a qualified math teacher for every class, we could wait forever. The only way to get these teachers would be to tell kids in school now that if they want to get into college, they'd all better learn math. And because they'd work to get what they want, we'd have many more college students—and, eventually, teachers—proficient in math.

The refusal to put in a better system of education *until* all have a fair opportunity to learn will not improve the opportunity to learn; it will merely perpetuate unfairness and lack of achievement. But if we institute standards, assessments and stakes, we will have more public support for fairness and get what other industrialized nations that have such a system get: a large number of people who are qualified to teach and a system that is better for all our students.

Why do we insist that schools follow ideas we reject everywhere else? We don't abolish medical school exams because not everyone has had the opportunity for top-notch pre-med education. Nor do we say that tests for airline pilots shouldn't count because not everyone has the opportunity to do well on them. We are afraid of not demanding high standards elsewhere. Public education seems to be the only thing we are willing to play around with.

Many who wish to hold education reform hostage to opportunity-to-learn standards have good intentions; others are just using this because they never want to see assessments with stakes. If either group prevails, it will win a battle; but we will lose the fight for improvement and fairness in our schools.

Mr. Shanker's comments appear in this ad under the auspices of the American Federation of Teachers. Reader correspondence is invited. Address your letters to Mr. Shanker at the AFT, 555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20001. © 1993 by Albert Shanker.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE NEW REPUBLIC

JUNE 21, 1993

ENERGY TAXES, PLEASE

Because the most vocal opponents of Bill Clinton's energy tax have been centrists like Representative Dave McCurdy, Senator David Boren and Senator John Breaux, there is a tendency to view this last great battle of the budget as another defining fight between old and new Democrats. Do not be deceived. McCurdy's and Boren's calls for deeper cuts and for limits on the growth of entitlement spending are to be applauded. But in opposing the BTU tax, the Oklahomans, Texans and Louisianans are speaking with their regional voices, not their New Democratic ones. The energy tax remains an excellent idea. The biggest problem with it, in fact, is that Clinton has had to compromise it too much to satisfy the recalcitrant Democrats.

The great advantage of an energy tax is that it accomplishes several goals simultaneously. It raises revenues while encouraging conservation. Conservation means a cleaner environment and less dependence on imported oil. It might even mean cheaper oil, as price drops follow a reduction in demand. With gasoline costing less in real terms than it did in the early 1960s, there simply isn't enough incentive for drivers to get their gas-guzzlers off the road or to carpool to work. While a gasoline tax encourages people to do these things, a BTU tax goes it one better: it gets individuals and businesses to conserve all forms of energy. If there's a flaw in Clinton's proposal, it's that the BTU tax may be too small to bring about significant changes in public and corporate behavior.

Boren and his fellow critics have advanced a series of specious arguments against the tax. The silliest is that it will hamper the competitiveness of American products abroad. In reality, energy is such a minor factor of production—about 5 percent on average—that a tax on it of a few percent is unlikely to have any measurable effect on prices. Our Japanese and European competitors pay energy taxes many times higher than the one under consideration today, and they've hardly suffered as a result. Taxes that force businesses to think about conservation may lead them to reap additional rewards from efficiency, as energy-poor countries such as Germany and Japan have been finding out for several decades.

Another complaint is that the BTU tax will cost jobs, particularly in energy-producing states. Certainly the conservation abetted by the tax will mean the loss of some energy production jobs. But the whole idea of the tax is that it doesn't harm one energy-producing industry more than another; if the tax hurts the oil industry in Louisiana, it hurts coal mining in West Virginia and nuclear power in Illinois too. The senators neglect to mention that the money saved on energy will be invested elsewhere in the economy. And, as the president rightly keeps reminding us, the deficit reduction made possible by increasing taxes means a decline in real interest rates, which creates jobs and lowers mortgage payments.

Boren and company's final objection is that the BTU tax will lead to the creation of a cumbersome, inefficient bureaucracy. This is self-fulfilling prophecy. In its original form, the tax was uncomplicated and easy to collect. It applied equally to all forms of fuel, based on their energy content. After the many changes sought by conservative Democrats are grafted on, however, it will be a headache. There will be one rate for coal, another for oil and still another for natural gas. Regional interests will be perpetually pitted against each other in an effort to secure more favorable treatment for their preferred forms of energy. Other industries will lobby for preferential treatment. Someday soon we will need an energy tax reform bill, to iron out all the perversities and inequalities of this one.

A far more sensible compromise for Clinton and Boren would be to lower the overall rate and keep the principle of a neutral, across-the-board energy tax intact. What seems about to emerge from the Senate, however, is a version so overworked and complex that its basic principle will have been lost. Clinton himself bears a measure of blame for this. He has pitched the BTU tax principally as a means of lowering the deficit. He has defended it by saying how little it will cost most Americans. In so doing, he has failed to make a compelling case for it. The president should have tried to persuade the public why an energy tax is better than other taxes, and why we as a country stand to gain from having one. Alas, it's one idea the great explainer hasn't done a very good job of explaining. •

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NOTEBOOK

GAGGING ON GERGEN: If the appointment of David Gergen is a sign that Bill Clinton is finally returning to the New Democrat philosophy that got him elected, it's welcome news. But there are plenty of ways the White House could signal such a shift without hiring the talk-show apostle of the Reagan administration. It could, for example, propose more deficit reduction and deeper spending cuts; it could stand by (and maybe even increase) the energy taxes it has already put on the table; it could make a real priority of welfare reform; it could devise a foreign policy that would actually do something about the genocidal violence in the Balkans; it could withdraw the Guinier nomination; it could appoint to real positions of authority those DLC types who were so noticeably slighted in the transition; it could give the vice president more real power and calm down the class-war rhetoric and New Age blather from, among other people, the first lady herself. It seems a shame that, instead of doing all these authentically Democratic things, the administration should seek out, of all people, a Republican who represented the administrations Clinton ran against only last year. We've heard of postideological, but this is ridiculous.

UNPRETTY PINKIE: Democracy in Pakistan gained an unexpected boost last week when the Supreme Court reinstated Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Pakistan's elected National Assembly, rebuffing President Ishaq Khan, who dismissed Sharif five weeks ago. Sharif had tried to repeal Pakistan's infamous Eighth Amendment, which allows the president to dismiss the prime minister and appoint his own. To everyone's surprise, Khan and Pakistan's military leaders accepted the court's ruling. Karachi University political scientist Arshad Syed Karim remarked that "every important pillar of society showed that they support democracy." Well, not quite. Benazir Bhutto, the woman internationally hailed as democracy's champion in the Muslim world, attacked the decision. Bhutto remains bitter that the court didn't act as courageously when she suffered similar treatment at Khan's hands in 1990. Last week's decision, she claimed, constitutes only a "superficial" move toward democracy. The only non-superficial moves, it appears, are ones that return her to power.

THE KORESH TAPES: *The Houston Chronicle* last week published transcripts of conversations between David Koresh and agents from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms. The tapes provide new insights into the real nature of the siege. Koresh claims the ATF agents came "cocked and locked" out of cattle trailers in their initial raid on the compound. He saw his reaction as legitimate self-defense against agents who'd made no effort to arrest him on his many trips into town: "They could have arrested me any day, taking my jogs. Every day, I took them ... I don't care who they are. Nobody is going to come to my home, with my babies around, shaking guns around, without a gun back in their face. That's just the American way." It's clear he intended at some point to leave the compound: "Once I do go out of here, I want to go out walking.... Every avenue that is going to give me the legal rights and protections and the ... security that our opponents are not going to plant something on us, is making moves to a better end." It's also clear he had no intention of committing suicide: "That's not even sane, it irks me." Among the other concerns of this alleged child-abuser was an insistence that a trust fund be set up for the Branch Davidian children: "That's one thing I'm going to be hard-nosed about." Koresh also refers to a comment made by an agent to one of the Davidians who'd left the compound, Kevin Whitecliff: "This one guy told him, 'You give me the heebie-geebies. I hope you fry.'" Eventually, that agent had his wish come true. •

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Unsafe haven

On May 27, in Yokosuka, Japan, Airman Apprentice Terry M. Helvey was sentenced to life imprisonment for the murder of Seaman Allen Schindler in a public restroom in Sasebo, Japan. Schindler, who was homosexual, was so badly beaten that the Navy pathologist described his injuries as "more consistent with a high-speed automobile accident or low-speed airplane crash." Schindler's liver "contained holes that allowed him [the pathologist] to see straight through it." What follows is the testimony of Airman Charles E. Vins, Helvey's companion in the murder, who was released on February 2 after three months in confinement in return for his testimony. The same day as the verdict, Senator Sam Nunn voiced opposition to a proposal that would allow gay soldiers to be open about their sexuality offbase. He feared it would provide them a "safe haven" from military life. —The Editors

As we left the bar ... Helvey noticed another sailor off our ship, Allen Schindler, walking by himself in front of us. I would have to say Schindler was no more than ten yards in front of us. In fact, the way he was walking, he must have passed the bar he came out of just prior to our departure. When Helvey saw him he said something to the effect, "Let's go fuck with him." I cannot recall if I responded to his statement, as it was not a question, it was more like a statement he made. At which time ... we walked behind Schindler to see where he was going. I do not recall everything we said, but we were just wondering where he was going, who he might be meeting and why he was off the ship. We knew he was on restriction for confessing to be a homosexual and was being kicked off the ship. I was just going by what Helvey told me a week prior. I do not actually recall how it came up or where we were, but I think it was in the galley. Helvey told that Schindler was a homosexual, but he did not get into details about Schindler's homosexual conduct.

I think at this time I should bring up the fact that Helvey has made no attempts to hide the fact that he dislikes homosexuals, and when he said he wanted to fuck with Schindler, I felt in my mind that he wanted to beat him up. Although he never came out and said that, I believed it to be so just by the way he acts and the things he has told me. He talks about kicking homosexuals' asses a lot. But I think it should be said he talks about doing that to all kinds of people....

Anyway, we both follow Schindler for a while. He walked in a horseshoe pattern from the city across a bridge to the Albuquerque park. As we were following him, we lost him for a second around by some bushes, but Helvey later pointed in the direction of a bathroom and said he walked in there. The next thing I knew (I say we were about ten to fifteen yards from the bathroom), Helvey takes off and runs into the bathroom. I would say Schindler was already in the bathroom for about forty seconds. I did not run, but I was in the bathroom within a couple of seconds after Helvey.

As I entered the bathroom I could see that Schindler, who had his back to me, was urinating in one of the urinals. I did not actually see this. I am just assuming that's what he was doing. At the same time I saw Helvey (he too had his back to me). He was standing at the urinal right next to Schindler pretending to go to the bathroom. He had his right hand clinched into a fist over his head as if he was getting ready to punch Schindler. Again, I did not actually see that he was just pretending to be urinating. I just got that impression by the way he was standing with his fist in the air. The next thing I knew I saw Schindler look toward Helvey. It was more a look as if he felt someone's presence next to him and wanted to see who it was. That's all he did. I did not see them talking to each other. I did not see Schindler expose himself to Helvey. And I did not see Schindler attempt to touch Helvey. As soon as Schindler looked in Helvey's direction, I saw Helvey come down hard with his fist and strike Schindler in the face. Schindler fell hard to the floor immediately. As soon as Helvey struck Schindler he bent down over his (Schindler's) head and got him into a head lock and held his neck tight, choking him, for a few seconds. When Helvey had Schindler in the choke hold, Schindler, in what appeared to be an instinctive move, placed his arms up around Helvey's head in an attempt to try to break free from his grasp. At the same time, but I am not sure, I think I saw Schindler bite Helvey's arm. I say this because Helvey yelled ... Helvey said something to the effect that, "The son of a bitch bit me."

When Helvey yelled I kicked Schindler in the head with the bottom or heel of my right foot. I do not know exactly where I struck him, but it was somewhere between his forehead and the top of his head. I did not kick him that hard, just hard enough so he would release his grip from Helvey, which he did. When Schindler released Helvey, Helvey also released the choke hold he had on him. At that time, Schindler was still conscious and in a crouched position on his feet. I looked down on him and thought he was going to come after me. So using the toe of my right foot I kicked Schindler on his right side. He did not fall backward, so, I believe I kicked him in the same manner and same location two more times.... After the third kick, I felt Helvey put his arm out and touch me and call out my name "Chuck," at which time he kicked Schindler in the head. With that kick, Schindler fell onto his back. Schindler was still conscious at this time. After that, Helvey just continued to kick Schindler. It looked like he was kicking a soccer ball. I kept hearing thuds every time he kicked him. He then started to work his way down. I would have to say Helvey kicked Schindler to the right side of his head at least five to ten times real hard. Blood was all over the place. His face was covered with blood. Helvey then started down and began to kick and stomp on Schindler's chest and torso.... I could not tell you how many times he kicked and stomped on his chest, but it was several. It lasted for at least thirty seconds. The last thing he did before I left was I saw Helvey stomp on Schindler's throat. He stepped on his throat very hard and then put all his weight on it.

Although I did not attempt to stop Helvey after my involvement, I do not feel I was responsible for Schindler's death. None of the blows I struck Schindler with were, in my opinion, life-threatening, or caused his unconsciousness. I think that is why Helvey is taking the blame for the death. He knew my part was limited to just a few blows. He knows he caused the most severe damage and killed Schindler. During the time I was watching Helvey, I do not know exactly how I was standing. I just know I stood by and watched. •

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Balkans on cable.

DEATH, LIVE

By Slavenka Drakulić

They say that a little girl was killed while eating a pie. It seemed that it happened like this: it was morning, bright and chilly. You ask yourself how that woman, her mother, made the pie in Sarajevo? What flour did she use? What oil? In any case, still half-asleep, the two-and-a-half-year-old girl had been sitting at the table, eating breakfast. At that moment, she heard the sound of shelling. Maybe she was frightened by it, so she ran to her mother—but maybe not. The sound of shelling is normal around here. A shell went through the roof of their house and landed in the kitchen. The girl fell to the floor. It all happened with lightning speed and she was dead before her parents or her grandfather had time to understand what was happening. By the time her father took her in his hands and looked for help, it was all over.

Then a T.V. camera arrived on the scene. This happened perhaps only one or two hours after the shelling. We see the small kitchen already without the little girl, the floor is covered with brick and plaster debris, scattered shoes, her little boots. The camera zooms in on the roof, on the hole left by the shell. Sky and cold descend through the gap into the kitchen. The father is sitting with his arms on the table, crying. The camera gets a close-up of his blue eyes and his tears—so that we, the television spectators, can be sure they are real, that he really cried, the little one's father.

He has on a white pullover made of a rough peasant's wool. The camera moves from his eyes to that pullover so that we can see a red stain on it, left where he held his girl when he picked her up from the floor—when it was already too late. The blood is not dry yet, the stain is bright red, it looks fresh. I know that raw, hand-spun wool that his pullover is made of. I can feel it under my fingers. It takes forever to dry; soaked blood stays wet a long time. Looking at the blood is nauseating. Still, the camera returns to it several times. This is unnecessary. But there is no defense from pictures like this—and no one to tell us how useless they are.

Now we are in the hospital. This is the first time we see the mother too. She lies on a kind of stretcher, covering her face with her hands. The father comes in, in his white pullover with the red stain, and embraces her. It is clear that this meeting in a hospital room is their first since the little one's death. On camera—for the first time. The mother lets out something. In other circumstances you might call it a cry, a howl. But now it is only a sound of emptiness; with that sound, the woman tells her husband she has just lost everything.

This is the end, this has to be the end. The camera can't go any further into human suffering. Neither we, the spectators, nor the people we can't see behind the camera—a reporter, a cameraman, a soundman—can stand this any longer. This has to stop—I repeat to myself while the camera goes on. Now we are looking at a white sheet with red spots. Red on white, that's the sign of her death. My God, how very bright her blood is. I don't want the camera to look under that cover hiding her small body. But someone's hand evades my thoughts and lifts the white sheet. Her face, we see her face. Her small deformed face, no longer human, framed by untidy tufts of her black hair, her half-closed eyes. We see a close-up of death. Then cut, a little coffin in the shallow ground. The report is finished. It has lasted three minutes.

A moment later, we become aware that we have just seen the tragedy of one family, filmed only a couple of hours after they lost their child. The whole tragedy has happened on camera. The only thing we have not witnessed is the moment of death. (A take from outside: the shell hits the roof. Then from inside: the girl falls from her chair, in slow motion, as if she's flying. A piece of pie drops from her hand and rolls on the ground. That's it. The reporter is pleased.) Well, why not? By now we should be able to stand that too. It's all in the name of documenting, which we obviously believe in.

In fact, that's probably the only thing we have not seen so far. We've watched headless corpses being eaten by pigs and dogs; scattered body parts that do not belong to anyone, anything; skeletons and half-rotted skulls. Children without legs, babies killed by sniper fire. A 12-year-old rape victim talking about it on camera. Day after day, death in Bosnia has been well documented. Sarajevo has been shelled by a million shells. In that city 80,000 kids are trapped, which makes it the biggest children's prison in the world. Five thousand of them were killed or simply died.

Fifty years ago this is how the Jews suffered; now it's the Muslims' turn. We remember it all, and because of that memory we have the idea that everything has to be carefully documented. Shameful history must never be repeated. And yet, here they are, generations who have learned at school about concentration camps and factories of death; generations whose parents swear it could never happen again, at least not in Europe, precisely because of the living memory of the recent past. What, then, has all the documentation changed? And what is being changed now by what seems to be the conscious, precise bookkeeping of death?

The biggest change has happened within ourselves: the audience, spectators. We started to believe this is our role, that it is possible to play the public, as if war is theater. Slowly, and without noticing it, a hardness has crept over us, an inability to see the truth. These are the signs of our own dying. The close-up of the dead

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A view of the United States as seen from space.
Photo courtesy of NASA.

The more progress we make in space, the further we'll go on Earth.

America needs space to grow. Advances in science, medicine and technology will be enhanced, even markedly increased, through our efforts in space. Ensuring America's preeminence in space is a national priority. As one of NASA's top performers, Lockheed is helping to lead this important effort.

We're at the forefront of space technology today. Our expertise extends from engineering and science support of Johnson Space Center to leadership in vital programs like Space Station *Freedom,* Space Shuttle Processing and the Hubble Space Telescope.

National priorities such as the space program demand advanced technology, reliable systems and affordable solutions. They demand a premier aerospace company. They demand Lockheed.

Lockheed leads.

Lockheed

Watch NOVA on PBS, Tuesdays at 8 p.m.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

girl's face was one scene too much because it was senseless. To watch war from so near and in its most macabre details makes sense only if we do so to change things for the better. But today, nothing changes. Documentation has become a perversion, a pornography of dying.

SLAVENKA DRAKULIĆ, a Croatian, is the author of *The Balkan Express: Fragments from the Other Side of War* (W. W. Norton).

COURT WATCH

COURT MARSHALL

By Jeffrey Rosen

Having peered behind the red velvet curtains of the Rehnquist Court, the press now tells the embarrassed justices that they have nothing to be embarrassed about. But after spending last week in the Marshall archives, I sympathize with William Rehnquist's fears. The portrait of the justices that emerges from their internal correspondence is not, in fact, particularly flattering. Far from showing a scholarly Court "communicating in utmost sincerity," as *The New York Times* put it, the papers reveal that the justices rarely communicate in writing about the substance of their work.

In the most dramatic cases of the Rehnquist era—flag burning, freedom of religion and the right to die—the justices are content to join opinions and dissents without requesting any substantive changes at all. Most "opinions of the Court," the files demonstrate, represent the legal reasoning of one person, scarcely changed by colleagues who agree with the result. The justices are always courteous, and occasionally even playful. (Rehnquist introduced a draft of his infamous 1991 nude dancing opinion with a verse from a once popular song: "Accentuate the positive / Eliminate the negative / Latch on to the Affirmative / Don't mess with Mr. In Between.") But with a few exceptions, they do not seem terribly interested in persuading, or being persuaded by, their colleagues.

The most painful irony of the Marshall papers is that the justice most likely to have been embarrassed by their release was Thurgood Marshall himself. Marshall's habit of delegating virtually all of his writing to his clerks, especially during his later years, is hardly news to Court observers. (Only Carl Rowan, Marshall's partisan biographer, tried implausibly to deny this.) But it is still discomforting to face the evidence. Throughout the Warren, Burger and Rehnquist eras, Marshall's clerks wrote detailed recommendations about every case, on which Marshall usually scrawled his assent with a blue pencil. The *Roe* v. *Wade* file, for example, includes a memo from Mark Tushnet, a Marshall clerk, urging the justice to ask Harry Blackmun to draw the line for abortions at fetal viability, rather than at the end of the first trimester. Marshall obliged, and after further lobbying from Brennan, Blackmun extended the deadline.

By the 1980s, however, Marshall's disengagement had reached its extreme. Journalists digging for scoops in the most famous cases of the Rehnquist era have been largely disappointed. In fact, the most internally contested case of Marshall's last year on the Court was *Lankford* v. *Idaho*, a scarcely noticed appeal in which Marshall almost agreed, for the first time in his career, to uphold the death penalty. The prosecutor had promised that he wouldn't ask for the death penalty; so the defendant's lawyer, relying on the promise, failed to introduce mitigating evidence that might have reduced his client's culpability. But the judge decided to impose capital punishment on his own. Marshall, a stickler for technicalities ever since his days as a great advocate, was so disgusted by the lawyer's incompetence that he cast the fifth vote to affirm the sentence. A delighted Rehnquist assigned him the majority opinion.

Marshall's law clerk then wrote an impassioned memo to Marshall. *Lankford*, she pointed out, appeared to be the first case in which Marshall had ever voted to uphold the death penalty, which he had previously said was *always* unconstitutional under the Eighth Amendment. Perhaps Marshall had not realized that "the question presented in Lankford is '[w]hether a *death sentence* violates the Sixth, *Eighth* and Fourteenth Amendments' (emphasis added)," she wrote. The next memo in the file is a handwritten letter from Marshall to Rehnquist: "I am sorry but I must ask you to re-assign Lankford v. Idaho. The question presented is 'whether a *death sentence* violates the Sixth, *Eighth* and Fourteenth Amendments' (emphasis added). I cannot bring myself to endorse the death penalty under the Eighth Amendment." When the dust settled, Stevens, writing for a 5-4 majority, reversed the conviction.

Lankford is a distressing case, but not because it shows a tie-breaking justice changing his vote. On the Platonic ideal of a Supreme Court, justices would change their positions often, and without embarrassment, in the spirit of intellectual experimentation and in response to the reasoned arguments of their colleagues. What makes *Lankford* distressing is that the justice changing his vote does not appear to have grappled with the constitutional issues the case presents.

In his disengagement, however, Marshall was hardly unique. Other dramatic shifts on the Rehnquist Court are rare; but when they occur, they too contain little evidence of rigorous debate about the text and history of the Constitution. A 1989 case, *Pennsylvania* v. *Union Gas*, is an even starker example of how crucial constitutional questions are decided with little debate. Byron White provided the fifth vote to uphold an interpretation of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the Eleventh Amendment that is patently inconsistent with its text and history. His cryptic concurrence became law school legend: "I agree with the conclusion reached by Justice Brennan ... although I do not agree with much of his reasoning. Accordingly, I would affirm." But the Marshall files reveal that White never bothered, in earlier drafts or in correspondence with his colleagues, to provide an intelligible explanation for his vote. Nor are the other conservatives any more forthcoming about their reasons for betraying their "strict constructionist" principles. Instead, the debate, which is more extensive than usual, focuses on the meaning of the disputed statute and ignores the important constitutional question entirely.

What can account for the lack of intellectual debate on the Rehnquist Court? The overriding reason, of course, is the very different levels of engagement among the justices. (Stevens and Scalia are usually first off the mark.) But there is a powerful institutional explanation as well: Rehnquist's mania for efficiency. In a plaintive 1989 letter to Rehnquist, Stevens objected to the chief justice's "unfair" system of reducing the share of majority opinions assigned to justices who fail to get their dissents out within four weeks after the majority opinion circulates. "I also think it may be unfair to give a black mark to a Justice who does not vote immediately after a dissent circulates," Stevens added. "Too much emphasis on speed can have an adverse effect on quality."

The Marshall papers confirm that the justices also feel tremendous internal pressure to join a majority opinion as soon as it circulates, committing themselves before they have had a chance to consider the best arguments on the other side. (Because of the low quality of many briefs and arguments, and the lack of debate at Conference, the best arguments often do not surface until the dissenting justice has had a chance to focus on them.) Scalia, to his great credit, has proposed that no majority opinions should be joined before the dissent has circulated. A chief justice less concerned with efficiency would endorse the reform. But this would reduce Rehnquist's ability to control the Court and to mold the law by exercising his power of assignment.

Comparisons are difficult, but there appears to be less debate under Rehnquist than under Burger and Warren. Few case files in the '80s can compare to the 1971 busing case, where Black, Harlan, Brennan and Douglas, in a remarkably detailed flurry of memos, wrestled the opinion from a clueless Warren Burger. Nevertheless, some of the great case files from the Warren era are thin; and the publication of Bob Woodward and Scott Armstrong's *The Brethren* (1979), which relied heavily on internal memoranda, may have encouraged the justices to put less on paper. This much, at least, seems clear: the dramatic decrease in the number of cases accepted for review in the '80s has not produced the corresponding increase in the quality of debate that the conservative justices promised. Instead, Rehnquist's most conspicuous legacy has been to make the Court more coldly bureaucratic.

As the voyeuristic thrill begins to fade, there are obvious costs to the hasty release of the Marshall papers: namely, the danger that other justices like Harry Blackmun, whose conference notes are much more meticulous than Marshall's, will be inclined to give their papers to the Virginia Military Institute rather than to the Library of Congress. But the most serious concern—that fear of future disclosures will inhibit debate among the justices—is hard to credit. For here is the most disconcerting secret of the Rehnquist Court: there is not all that much debate to inhibit. •

WHITE HOUSE WATCH

PRESS GANG

By Fred Barnes

President Clinton's attitude toward the White House press corps started as simmering distrust. And for a while he managed to repress that feeling, at least at public events. At the radio and T.V. correspondents dinner on March 18, he dazzled the media with a warm and self-deprecating monologue. Clinton said that at his first meeting with British Prime Minister John Major, "He took one look at me and said, 'You don't look at all like your passport photo.'" On March 27 his talk at the white-tie dinner of the Gridiron Club, a group of newspaper columnists and bureau chiefs, was every bit as ingratiating. Soon he stopped pretending. Clinton's humor had a sharp edge at the White House Correspondents Association dinner on May 1. He zinged numerous journalists, then ad-libbed that radio gabster Rush Limbaugh had defended Attorney General Janet Reno "because she was attacked by a black guy." This came in the same speech in which he wrongly claimed Bob Dole had criticized a federal program while seeking a grant from it. That barb was also, in White House jargon, an "improv." Clinton had been informed just before he spoke that the Dole story was unconfirmed, but he went ahead anyway. Maybe David Gergen, Clinton's new communications chief, could have kept him from this faux pas, but Gergen wasn't on board yet.

Clinton's slow burn turned to hot anger in May when the press made mega-stories out of his runway haircut in Los Angeles and the firing of White House Travel Office personnel. On May 26 he groused to corporate CEOs over lunch—he has a regular Wednesday lunch with business executives—that the media treat him like a "punching bag." The next day his two-hour appearance on "CBS This Morning" for a town meeting in the Rose Garden was suffused with dis-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

gust for the press. He denounced White House reporters for distortions ("a little thing becomes big because it makes a good story"). At one point Paula Zahn introduced a segment by saying, "We continue our confrontation with—conversation, not confrontation with." Clinton interjected acidly, "Truth comes out."

The trouble with Clinton's criticism of the media is that he sounds like someone complaining about the weather. He's railing against the way the world works. Sure, the White House press corps has roughed him up and blown trivial matters out of proportion. But that's what it does to all presidents. Ask George Bush. Still, Clinton and his advisers firmly believe the media's coverage of him is different, and worse, than coverage of other presidents.

There they have a point. Reporters grew hostile on day one when the upper press area (where the office of Press Secretary Dee Dee Myers is and former communications director George Stephanopoulos was) was put off-limits. It's dubbed the "no fly zone." The White House explanation was legit: it had become a "policy area" since Stephanopoulos played a dual role as spokesman and policy adviser. But many in the press regarded this minor change as a major affront, and still do. Clintonites also feel they're victims of age discrimination, directed especially at Stephanopoulos (32) and Myers (31). Since they're younger than most White House reporters, they don't get the respect that, say, Marlin Fitzwater did in the Reagan and Bush years. This is true. At a contentious briefing on May 19, Myers was asked how the next presidential trip would be handled after the firing of travel officials. "Badly," a reporter bellowed before she could answer. When she announced a man named Chris Walton would begin working in the travel office, a reporter inquired, "Is he of drinking age?" Myers didn't answer that one.

The other source of press animus, according to Clinton and company, is loss of status. The White House has touted Clinton's outreach to non-Washington media. Other presidents, particularly Bush, tried to expand contact with the regional press. "What's different is President Clinton has made a commitment of his time to do this," says a White House official. In Milwaukee on June 1, he held a "press roundtable" with local newspaper, T.V. and radio reporters. In Los Alamos, New Mexico, on May 17, he was interviewed by San Francisco television and radio reporters. In Chicago on May 11, he made himself available to print and T.V. journalists from

Perk prince

So Bill Clinton did a bonehead thing on the runway of LAX. But by recent presidential standards, his excesses are no big deal. Compare Clinton's first months to Reagan's and Bush's and it seems clear that he's getting a bum rap from the press. Has anyone reported that Clinton is the only one of the three not to have taken a vacation by February? (By then, even diligent Jimmy Carter had bolted for Plains.) When Clinton's staff got the commander in chief a $40 room with a view of the parking lot at a Comfort Inn in Chillicothe, Ohio, the only major paper to notice (in a tiny item) was *The Wall Street Journal*. Contrast that with Reagan's March 13, 1981, visit to Manhattan to see First Son Ron's ballet debut at Lincoln Center, in which the president paralyzed Manhattan while he took in a Broadway show, dined at Le Cirque and then crashed at the Waldorf. Reagan's junket was his third weekend off in a row. He'd been to Camp David and then to his ranch, which was no bargain either: flying Air Force One out cost $5,200 per hour, plus $1,000 per hour for the helicopter from Santa Barbara to Rancho del Cielo. The reaction? *The New York Times* ran a letter complaining Reagan had blown $50,000 worth of taxes in California.

As for the inconvenience to air travelers, that's hardly unprecedented. Presidents wreak logistical havoc wherever they go. "It's like trying to take a 300- to 600-person convention and move it," says Kevin Moley, director of advance for the 1988 Bush campaign. Jim Hooley, Reagan's director of advance, remembers times when freeway traffic, which is supposed to be stopped only in the direction the motorcade is traveling, was blocked in both directions by skittish local police and security officers. On one such stalled six-lane highway, Reagan looked out of the window and "asked why lanes of people were giving him the finger." John Keller, Bush's director of advance, remembers "miles and miles and miles of cars backed up on the other side" of I-95. This happened "a couple of times," so the Bushies changed to helicopters. "You'd look down and still see freeways blocked," says Keller.

The head of Reagan's advance seems to be the one person in America who doesn't blame Clinton for jamming up LAX; Hooley suspects that an excitable air traffic controller, unaware that Air Force One wasn't taxiing, kept the runways closed as if it was. "There were many times where we'd get letters saying, 'I was waiting on a TWA flight and it's your fault,'" says Hooley. Keller recalls "overzealous air traffic controllers who'd think it was necessary to shut down the whole place.... I bet we shut down L.A. at one point, and New York. These things definitely happen."

Domestic concerns have kept Clinton in Washington, a distinct contrast to Bush's early days, during which the president whizzed around the world with a manic energy that was seen at the time as charming. Bush's Asia trip, like all major foreign expeditions, required Air Force One, a backup and a 747 for the press. Even at home in Kennebunkport, Bush's presence caused jam-ups and even interfered with the livelihood of local lobstermen as they tangled with the Secret Service and Coast Guard. In reaction, the same papers that are now scalping Clinton ran cutesy stories detailing the horseshoe-playing and golfing habits of the self-styled "Mr. Smooth."

GARY J. BASS

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

North and South Dakota. None of these sessions was available to White House reporters. White House officials argue that access granted regional media is not at the expense of White House reporters. "But there's a perception we sat down and decided we're going to go around them," an official says. It's a perception based on the fact that Clinton does indeed go around them. One more thing about the White House-press friction: Clinton could have alleviated much of it, but chose not to.

Clinton's disdain for the press preceded his presidency. It wasn't the coverage of Gennifer Flowers that chilled him. It was the media's pursuit of the real story of his Vietnam-era draft avoidance. "That made the president realize it doesn't make any difference whether the press likes you personally, likes your policies," says an adviser. "If there's a competitive story, they'll go after it." One result: since the primary campaign last year, Clinton has schmoozed reporters very little. This is remarkable both because reporters are so vulnerable to backslapping and because Clinton is so likable. He's launched only one charm offensive as president, inviting the four T.V. anchors to lunch on February 17, the day he addressed Congress on his economic plan. And it worked. "I was amazed at how sycophantic the coverage was," says an administration official. Aides have suggested that Clinton invite reporters to lunch or dinner, but he hasn't taken the hint. Most nights, the White House schedule says, "BC & HRC—RON WH." (That's "Rest Of Night.")

DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

That gives him plenty of free time to work up his list of the worst covered stories of his presidency. I've figured out Clinton's top five. No. 1, the haircut and travel office fiascos. The White House admits to handling these stories clumsily but heaps most of the blame on veteran White House reporters. "There's a difference between the people who covered the Clinton campaign and those who covered the [pre-Clinton] White House," says a Clinton aide. The old hands are more adversarial. What most infuriated the White House was the skepticism over the firing of travel office personnel for alleged "mismanagement." The press ought to be investigating those people, not the officials who dismissed them, White House aides fume. My guess is reporters will get around to that story, but their first instinct is always to cover the president's role in any flap. In this one, Clinton has given them lots to cover.

Worst story No. 2 is gays in the military. The impression created by the media, Clinton moans, is that he has devoted long hours to the issue. He says he's spent only two-and-a-half hours (aides say it's more like six). In any case, "Anytime he mentions gays in the military it's a two-day story," an official insists. No. 3, foreign policy. Clinton believes he gets no credit. He boldly organized world support for Boris Yeltsin prior to the Russian referendum, which Yeltsin won. He expected accolades. Four, Clinton feels the press downplays his victories in Congress (family leave, motor voter registration, budget resolution), while hyping his one major defeat (economic stimulus). Five, Clinton thinks the press has characterized his economic package as largely tax hikes. "Most people in this country have no earthly idea that we're going to cut way over $200 million in spending," he said on CBS. On this point, Clinton has identified the wrong culprit. His problem is with Dole, not the press.

Gergen, who calls himself a "right-of-center centrist," may help with Dole, but his main job is placating the press. He's Clinton's emissary to elite Washington, the permanent community in which the press is paramount. He's perfect for the job, an establishment figure par excellence, and thus the sort of person reporters respect. If you doubt his credentials, listen to him describe his recent activities at a May 29 briefing: "I'm a member of this Nunn-Domenici commission" on deficit reduction. "I was there at the founding of the Concord Coalition" organized by Warren Rudman and Paul Tsongas. "I've recently been a member of the Carnegie Endowment for Peace" study group on for-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

eign policy. "I helped found a group out at the Aspen Institute which is co-chaired by Bill Bradley and Bill Bennett. I serve as executive director of that." And so on.

Gergen's first assignment for Clinton was a near-impossible one. White House reporters often whine that Clinton doesn't like them. Gergen said he and Clinton had "a long conversation about relationships with the press and so forth." And he told Clinton of his "respect for the press" and his belief in "an open-door policy." Clinton, he said, "shares all those views." He does? "I know some of you perhaps don't sense that," Gergen said. "I hope we can convince you both by word and deed that we believe in that." Good luck. •

The lies journalists tell.

FIBBERS

By Katherine Dunn

Of all the lies that are swallowed and regurgitated by the media, the ones that hurt the most come from the Good Guys, the grass-roots do-gooders, the social work heroes, the non-profit advocacy groups battling for peace, justice and equality. I first learned that angels lie when I was doing a trivia Q&A column for a weekly newspaper in Portland, Oregon. Part of the fun was debunking popular mythology. No, painting your entire body gold will not suffocate you. James Bond lied. No, your hair and fingernails do not keep growing after you die. Edgar Allan Poe or somebody made that up to gross you out. That sort of thing.

It was the mid-'80s, the Missing Children campaign was hot and all those lost little faces were staring at us from milk cartons. The news stories insinuated that these tots—tens of thousands of them—had been tortured and murdered or snatched by pornographers. Moms like me shook in their boots until it was reported that the majority of the children were either runaways or pawns in custody disputes. Eventually, a reporter friend of mine called the FBI to ask exactly how many missing kids there actually were. He was told, "Seven," not 70,000. Seven stranger abductions.

I assumed this was an isolated incident and shook my head. But things kept cropping up. The next case came to my attention only because I am a Christmas fan: nothing to do with religion, everything to do with the big winter party. I think it's nice that a major chunk of the nation's retail income pours in between Thanksgiving and New Year's. It's the big potlatch giveaway. After all, we spend our money on worse things.

Every year in my town the papers and T.V. news run stories about holiday suicides. There are plenty of quotes from crisis hotline coordinators, bemoaning the *inevitability* of such acts during the holiday season. We're left with the horrible specter of the lonely old lady with her head in the oven, the depressed teen sucking a gun barrel.

But in my experience the stories never give you any stats. So I called Oregon's vital statistics office to find out how bad it really was. The researcher in charge of suicide stats was delighted to talk. He explained that for all the years suicide figures have been kept in Oregon, the rate declines between Thanksgiving and New Year's. In fact, at least in Oregon, you are less likely to off yourself in the last half of December than at any other time of the year. Things pick up in February and peak again in August. The statistician was miffed at the Christmas suicide stories too. He said I was the only reporter who had ever called to ask about them.

I told this to a friend who works at a large daily paper. He explained that a lot of reporters don't check facts provided by non-profit organizations because they assume non-profits don't have anything to gain by lying. Why would the good folks at the suicide hotlines put out such a barrel of bull? Could it be that a big slice of the years' donations slides in right around Christmas—just in time to be tax deductible? Is this a lie for a share of the pie?

We've had odd fictions popping out of the public-interest sector off and on, but last year was special. Oregon had the deep embarrassment of nearly passing Measure 9, a highly publicized anti-homosexual political campaign mounted by a right-wing fundamentalist group called the Oregon Citizens' Alliance. The OCA is still alive, still dangerous and still pushing ballot measures.

The furor sparked by the OCA led to plenty of documented viciousness against gays and lesbians. Apparently, though, for a few ardent gay rights activists, reality wasn't ugly enough. A report released in March by the non-profit Lesbian Community Project depicted Oregon, with a population of 2.5 million, as having far more gay bashing than any other state in the nation. The report used figures compiled from calls made to a record-a-phone dubbed the Homophobic Violence Reporting Hotline. The majority of the reported incidents were harassing phone calls and spoken threats, acts that are illegal but not violent. Some recounted seeing people wearing pro-Measure 9 buttons or T-shirts. Other callers complained about having their No-On-9 lawn signs stolen. When asked why these should be defined as violence, Hotline representatives explained that they didn't define the incidents. The callers did so simply by calling. None of the tapes or written reports on these phone calls was available for examination. They were all confidential.

Along with their report, the Hotline administrators issued a press release that included the story of a straight woman in a small Oregon town, a married

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mother of two, who volunteered in an AIDS hospice and supported gay rights. According to the press release, this woman and her family had been harassed and threatened. Her horses had been poisoned, and one, a beautiful white mare, had been attacked with a pitchfork, its face raked and scratched, its body punctured.

Only one reporter in the state bothered to check up on the horse story. That was a friend of mine, Jim Redden, who publishes an alternative newspaper called *PDXS*. He found no credible evidence to support this grisly tale. Officials familiar with the woman denied it ever happened. Apparently it was invented.

Lest you think this happens only in Portland, the twisted noire capital of the planet, let's remember the great Super Bowl fiasco perpetrated in January. A network of feminist activists including the feminist wing of Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting claimed Super Bowl Sunday was "the biggest day of the year for violence against women." Inspired by the group's news conference in Pasadena, the Associated Press and CBS News labeled Super Bowl Sunday "a day of dread" for women. "Good Morning America" featured an interview with Lenore Walker, a Denver psychiatrist who claimed to have done a study of ten years' worth of violence against women on Super Bowl Sundays. FAIR announced a nationwide phone bank for reporting domestic violence during the game and, incidentally, for raising money. The p.r. firm of Dobisky Associates in Keene, New Hampshire, sent out a mailing with a warning for at-risk women: "Don't remain alone with him during the game." *The Boston Globe*, *The Oregonian* and other newspapers ran stories reporting that women's shelters and violence hotlines had more calls from victims on Super Bowl Sunday than on any other day. NBC aired a public service announcement against wife beating just before the game.

The day after the Super Bowl, the Associated Press carried a story by Ken Ringle of *The Washington Post*. Ringle had seen the wire story on the Pasadena press conference and had checked out the assertions. According to Ringle, at the Pasadena press conference "Sheila Kuehl, managing lawyer of the California Women's Law Center, said a study by sociologists at Old Dominion University in Norfolk found police reports of beatings and hospital admissions in Northern Virginia rose 40 percent after games won by the Washington [Redskins] during [1988-89]. But when asked about that assertion, Janet Katz, professor of sociology and criminal justice at Old Dominion and one of the study's authors, said, 'That's not what we found at all.'"

So Ringle called Kuehl, who told him she got her information from a 1992 article outlining the research in a journal called *Violence and Victims*. "I was simply quoting from their own summary of the research," she said. "As I read these numbers, one of the tables does show an increase of admissions of 40 percent over the average intakes. It doesn't say that after every game there was a 40 percent increase. And I can't say that every Super Bowl it goes up 40 percent." But that's certainly the impression she gave in Pasadena.

Ringle went on to demolish the publicity claims. He quoted experts who said there was no documented evidence of a link between pro football and domestic violence. He called women's shelters and got their answer: "No increase." All the studies and reports that had been cited were either grossly misrepresented or didn't even exist. The entire campaign was a lie. One authority on battered women told Ringle, "I hate this. I've devoted fourteen years of my life trying to bring to the public's attention the very serious problem of battered women. And when people make crazy statements like this, the credibility of the whole cause can go right out the window." This isn't the only example of numbers being used as ammunition in a political battle. Witness the ongoing debate over the number of gay Americans. Note the conflicting figures for rape, domestic violence and child abuse.

Of course, people have always been willing to lie as well as die for what they believe in. There's nothing new about it. We twist the bravest ideals to our own ends. The well-meaning grow desperate for results and stoop to the tactics of their enemies. It happens all the time. But that doesn't mean we have to swallow what they're feeding us. The press can refuse to print what they tell us unless it's verified. Ask real questions—Where did that number come from? Who did this study? How was that information collected? What kind of credibility does this report deserve? Who says so? And who disagrees? And why?

Holding the good guys accountable doesn't mean that they are bad guys. Most of the evil in the world is done with the best intentions. As Ringle told me, "You guard against becoming a tool for lies by realizing that even in the best of causes, people try to use you. Both sides try to use you. You guard your neutrality. Apply equal skepticism to both sides. And if your mother says she loves you, check it out."

KATHERINE DUNN is the author of *Geek Love* (Knopf).

Bibi Netanyahu's new Likud.

THE SAVIOR

By Yossi Klein Halevi

It is a cool spring evening in Jerusalem, and several thousand young people are crowded into a downtown park to protest the resumption of peace talks in Washington. They wave giant Israeli flags and desperate signs: "Today the Golan, Tomorrow Jerusalem," "Rabin Is Leading Us To Civil War," "STOP THE SURRENDER."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The rally has been summoned by newly elected Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu—whom everyone in Israel, whether they admire or detest him, calls "Bibi." The crowds spot him walking toward the podium and chant his name like a slogan. Netanyahu offers a perfunctory half-smile. He avoids eye contact with supporters and seems uncomfortable among so many strangers. His followers readily concede he is aloof, ruthless, a bastard who's been caught cheating on his third wife. Still, they revere him: he is their hope for rallying the demoralized right for its final struggle over the territories.

Only a few months ago neither Netanyahu nor the Likud seemed capable of seriously challenging the Labor government. The chronic infighting largely responsible for the Likud's defeat in the 1992 election had reached an all-time high. But then, on March 24, Netanyahu emerged from a four-way race for party leadership with an absolute majority, reinvigorated the Likud and became undisputed leader of the right-wing opposition. Indeed, virtually the entire right is represented at tonight's demonstration: religious teenage girls from the settlements, Tel Aviv boys from the pro-"transfer" party Moledet, Golan farmers from secular kibbutzim, black-hatted yeshiva students.

Netanyahu speaks. His neck seems to thicken as he taunts Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin for weakness: he spits out the names of left-wing politicians, pausing between each one long enough for the crowd to shout its rage. "This government is opening the way to an Islamic Palestinian state in the suburbs of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv!" he roars. "Never before in the history of Israel has any government conceded so much, so quickly—for nothing! Rabin has no right to endanger the state, to bury the Jewish dream of generations!"

The message is fear, and no Israeli politician since Menachem Begin has conveyed that primal Jewish dread as forcefully as Bibi Netanyahu. Netanyahu amplifies the anxiety that whispers somewhere within most Israelis, no matter what their politics: that the virtually instant transformation of the Jews from victims to victors can be just as quickly reversed. He compares a future Israel squeezed back into its eight-mile-wide, pre-1967 borders to the truncated Lebanese Christian enclave around the Beirut suburb of Junieh, defenseless against the Muslims on the hills above. In Netanyahu's nightmare scenario, Junieh is Tel Aviv.

For the Arabs, argues Netanyahu, diplomacy is war by other means. And he says he knows how to fight back. The Palestinians want statehood? Offer them a take-it-or-leave-it autonomy under permanent Israeli control. The Syrians demand the Golan in exchange for a peace treaty? Offer "peace for peace" instead. Terrorists are rampaging through the streets? Impose the death penalty and increase deportations.

The recent wave of terrorist knifings convinced even many right-wing Israelis that they face a wrenching choice between internal chaos within strong borders or internal cohesion within vulnerable borders. But Netanyahu tells Israelis they can have it all: security within and without. He promises to restore the élan of the Zionist past, when doing the impossible was considered routine. Rabin's admission that the intifada can be stopped only by political means is, according to Netanyahu, a Zionist sin. Netanyahu, the former commando who in 1972 helped liberate a hijacked plane at Israel's Ben-Gurion Airport, knows you can defeat terror. All you need is will.

For Israelis, the name "Netanyahu" symbolizes Zionism's defiance of the odds. Bibi's older brother, Yoni, is one of Israel's folk heroes. In July 1976 he was killed leading the commando unit that retrieved 100 hijacked Jews from Uganda's Entebbe airport. Bibi and Yoni were inseparable. Both belonged to Sayeret, the army's most elite commando unit. For weeks after Yoni died, recalls Bibi's uncle, Saadya Mileikowsky Netanyahu, Bibi couldn't swallow food.

Consciously or not, Bibi's politics of fear echoes Yoni's. Following the traumatic 1973 Yom Kippur War, Yoni wrote bitter letters from his unit to Bibi, then studying at MIT, warning of the coming destruction of Israel. Yoni wondered whether the hard-earned gains of Israeli soldiers on the battlefield would be squandered by their weak political leaders; and he hinted at quitting his army career to enter politics. Some of those around Bibi see his decision to exchange a business career for politics as an attempt to fulfill Yoni's intention. "Sometimes I think Bibi lives for two people," says an adviser, "himself and Yoni."

As leader of the Likud, Netanyahu inherits Zionism's most bitter schism, the half-century-old feud between Labor and Revisionism, Likud's ideological precursor. Netanyahu has, in a sense, been primed for that struggle since childhood. His father, a professor of Jewish history, had been a leading Revisionist intellectual in the 1930s. He taught his children Revisionism's grudge: that the Zionist left repeatedly endangered Jewish survival. The Revisionists had insisted that Arab enmity be met with an "iron wall" of Jewish power; but only belatedly did the left begin to arm seriously. The Revisionists had envisioned biblical borders extending over both banks of the Jordan river, while Labor compromised time and again, reducing Israel to its fragile pre-'67 borders. Only the Revisionists, Zionism's hard realists, could be trusted to teach the Jews how to survive.

Netanyahu has applied Revisionism's apocalyptic critique of Labor to the current territorial debate. For him, the left's insistence that peace is possible with a violent Arab world that can't even live with itself is merely the latest expression of its fatal utopianism. The Golan Heights overlooking Galilee and the Samarian mountain ridge overlooking Israel's populous coastal plain form a natural "iron wall" against Arab aggression; and Netanyahu regards the struggle to keep the final bank of the Jordan river in Israeli hands as the culmination of Revisionism's long war against Labor for Jewish survival.

Yet Netanyahu is no holdover of a musty Zionist ideology, but a Revisionist for '90s Israel. He is the first

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Israeli-born leader of the Likud—indeed, of either of the country's two major parties. (Rabin was born in pre-state Palestine.) And he is attempting to transform the Likud from an outsider's coalition of Holocaust survivors and Sephardi immigrants into a mainstream party: by defeating Morrocan-born David Levy, leader of the Likud's camp of aggrieved Sephardim, Netanyahu has brought the party into the postethnic era of Israeli politics. Even Netanyahu's nightmares are specifically Israeli and Middle Eastern: Junieh, not Auschwitz.

At 43, Netanyahu is the youngest politician ever to lead a major Israeli party. With his master's degree in business administration from MIT, he projects Western efficiency—a quality Israelis crave almost as much as physical security. Since taking over the "Fortress," as Likud headquarters in Tel Aviv is officially named, Netanyahu has brought in the building's first computers, updated its antiquated phones and energized a moribund institution with a youthful and ambitious staff.

Ask his advisers what changes to expect from prime minister Netanyahu and they invariably respond first with domestic issues. He will reform the political system, cut socialist bureaucracy, privatize companies—finalize the country's incomplete westernization. "More than anything else, the people around Netanyahu want Israel to be part of the modern world," says a close adviser. "We're sick of the country being run like a Polish ghetto."

Netanyahu explains the logic of change this way: without political reform, there will be no economic reform; without economic reform, no growth; without growth, no mass immigration; without mass immigration, Israel will wither. And there is the irony: even Netanyahu's promise of creating a more westernized, rational Israel is burdened by existential dread. No matter what the issue, the bottom line is always survival.

That is the message Netanyahu believes will make him Israel's next prime minister. He is hoping that his campaign against territorial concessions will erode public support of the government and force Rabin to call early elections before moving on either a Golan withdrawal or West Bank autonomy. If elections were held today, according to the polls, Netanyahu would win by a slight margin.

But even if Rabin manages a deal with the Syrians and the Palestinians, Netanyahu can still stop the process. Autonomy will probably be a five-year interim phase; and many here believe it could turn into a nightmare of settler-Palestinian and intra-Palestinian violence. If that happens, Netanyahu will run in the 1996 elections as the man who can stop the emergence of a second Lebanon—or worse, an Islamic Palestinian state—in the suburbs of Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. A last-minute Entebbe rescue, but writ large: Yoni saved 100 Jews; Bibi will save the Jewish state.

YOSSI KLEIN HALEVI is a senior writer for *The Jerusalem Report*.

A real AIDS cure.

ONLY SELECT

By Malcolm Gladwell

Among the many posters that make up the Centers for Disease Control's public campaign against HIV, there is one with a group of young faces—white, black and brown—above the bold-lettered caption: "How much do your children know about AIDS?" The advertisement carries a familiar message, a call to greater education and awareness. But beyond that four-letter mention of AIDS there is nothing else to connect it to the real world of the epidemic. There is no one blistered or dying in the picture. The children scarcely seem old enough to understand what AIDS is, let alone engage in any of the behavior that would put them at risk for acquiring the virus. Even the fine print at the bottom of the page says only that "your children need an understanding of what it takes to be healthy." It is a message stripped of context: an appeal to the virtues of awareness that could just as easily have asked about tooth decay or taking candy from strangers or looking both ways before crossing the street.

Just over a decade after it began, the war against AIDS has become indistinguishable from the war against everything else. It has incorporated the language and psychology of contemporary self-help movements. It preaches the value of education, personal responsibility and self-discipline, as if unsafe sex were like smoking or overeating. It has created a class of advocates and scientists who line up alongside the cancer people and the heart disease people for their share of research dollars. To listen to the pleas for AIDS research money on Capitol Hill is to hear an almost perfect echo of previous appeals for the War on Cancer: if enough scientists are given enough money and pull enough all-nighters, we can lick this thing.

Nowhere in all of this is any consideration of HIV itself and the unique conditions that surround its spread in the United States. While no one involved with AIDS would ever deny that it dwarfs previous epidemics in the degree of its challenge and complexity, somehow when designing a program to stop it, we have assumed it can be fought with the same tools that we use on cigarettes and drunk driving. With the number of new HIV infections in the United States hovering stubbornly above 40,000 a year and the disease continueing to make inroads in our most vulnerable neighborhoods, it is time to question this assumption. Does AIDS haunt us because we haven't educated enough people and done enough research? Or is the problem

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that education and research alone are not the best way to fight this disease?

There is, to begin with, our troubling preoccupation with the condom. Because of its simplicity and its obvious ideological appeal, the condom has become the cornerstone of our AIDS prevention efforts. There remains precious little evidence, however, that the call for safe sex is actually working. Take, for example, condom use among sexually active urban adolescents, a group clearly at risk for HIV. According to a recent study by the Urban Institute, about 56.7 percent of urban males between 15 and 19 years old said they used a condom the last time they had sex, which is about double the percentage of a decade ago. Sound impressive? It shouldn't.

Of those males who had one sexual partner a year—a group whose risk of exposure to HIV is probably minimal—63 percent used a condom. The rate dropped to 56 percent for those who had two partners a year and 45 percent for those who had three. For the core risk group of highly sexually active teens with more than four partners a year—probably the only teen subset with an appreciable risk of acquiring HIV—37 percent used a condom. This is not a trend unique to teenagers. A national sex survey published earlier this year showed the same pattern among adult men; the more someone is at risk, the less likely he is to use a condom.

There is another, less obvious problem. When condoms are used, they aren't used very well, particularly by those who need protection the most. This fact has been obscured by the repeated and misleading use of the statistic that condoms are 97 percent to 98 percent effective as a barrier against pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease. The number, however, only refers to those occasions when the condom is used perfectly, every time. And who uses it perfectly, every time? Well, no one.

This is a common phenomenon with all types of contraception: "typical" effectiveness rates depend on the user. In the hands of an older, middle-class, married woman, for example, a diaphragm has an annual failure rate of 9 percent. For single, lower-income women under 20, by contrast—women who are much more likely to have sex while drunk or to use the device improperly—the annual failure rate approaches 40 percent.

The same is true of condoms. The only Americans who as a group use the method with anything approaching optimal effectiveness are (once again) married, middle-class, heterosexual couples over 30, for whom condoms have an annual success rate of 93.6 percent. That's another impressive statistic. But who cares? As a class, these people have a better chance of being hit by a meteorite than acquiring HIV through sex. Low-income, single women under 24 and their partners, by contrast, a group at great risk for the virus, use condoms so intermittently and, when they do, with such lack of competence that for them the annual failure rate is about three times higher.

Keep in mind that these numbers are for pregnancy, where the vast number of mistakes don't result in any harm. They are even more worrisome for the use of condoms as prevention against sexually transmitted diseases, where every mistake has the potential to result in infection. Michael Rosenberg, a researcher at the University of North Carolina, recently estimated from available clinical evidence how much condoms in typical use among high-risk groups lowered the risk of acquiring HIV. His conclusion: about 30 percent.

This is safe sex?

There should be nothing surprising about the failure of the safe sex message among those who need it the most. To ask someone to use a condom is to ask him to perform a complicated risk-benefit analysis, to weigh the statistical likelihood of becoming infected against the inconvenience of wearing a condom. This is the kind of calculation that Americans, as part of the general infatuation with preaching individual responsibility for health, are increasingly asked to make about their diet, about smoking, about wearing a seat belt.

But not everyone is very good at this. The teenage inner-city drug dealer, half of whose peers are dead or in prison, probably doesn't worry about saturated fats. To a drunken 17-year-old, wearing a seat belt does not seem like a necessary concession to mortality. When it comes to personal risk reduction, there is a growing divide along the lines of income and education. There is a class of Americans who eat well, see their doctors regularly and attend aerobics classes. And there's a class for whom these things make little or no sense.

Somehow we have expected AIDS to be different. Condoms have been promoted as the principal agent of prevention on the blithe assumption that those who live in poverty, whose self-esteem and personal prospects are dismal, who lack the skills to communicate, who do drugs and take other risks in their daily lives will strap one on as readily as suburban couples. They haven't done it in the past. And, after a decade of tireless condom promotion, there is no evidence that they are doing it in any great numbers now.

This is not to say that we shouldn't try to convince those most hostile to condoms to take precautions. A few aggressive campaigns using sexually explicit and culturally relevant techniques have scored modest successes in reaching those most at risk. But it is one thing to expand the acceptability of condoms as part of a broader anti-AIDS campaign. It is quite another to construct an entire prevention effort in denial of everything we know about human behavior.

No less hopeful—and naive—is the expectation that science can bring an end to the AIDS epidemic. Scientists have done precisely what they are supposed to do, namely attack the problem from every conceivable angle. But they cannot be asked to play the central role in the attack on HIV, nor should they be elevated to the status of saviors of the sick. AIDS research simply is not,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in and of itself, a strategy for fighting the epidemic. A strategy is a series of concrete steps with a clear goal and a predictable result. Research is a fishing expedition. There is a difference.

It is worth remembering, in this context, that the War on Cancer, while it resulted in a wonderful array of scientific breakthroughs, did not cure cancer. There is no guarantee that the war on AIDS—which has made spectacular contributions to our understanding of retroviruses and the human immune system—will cure AIDS either. Perhaps more important, there is no guarantee that even if some miraculous breakthrough were discovered, it would translate into lives saved. There are plenty of instances where researchers have answered a fundamental question about a disease only to have indifference, prejudice and stupidity get in the way of any good being done.

Imagine, for a moment, that we manage to overcome all of the considerable scientific obstacles that stand in the way of developing an AIDS vaccine. Where would it get us? This is a country that until recently could not muster the political will to vaccinate its children against measles. This is also a country that has not managed to teach birth control to teenagers, despite the existence of effective contraceptives. Indeed, this is a country that cannot even decide how sex should be discussed in the schools. How on earth could a mass immunization of teens against HIV be carried out?

"How many parents would object to having their children immunized?" asked June Obsorne, chairwoman of the National Commission on AIDS, in a speech at the International AIDS Conference in Amsterdam last year. "And out of those how many would refuse out of conviction. Out of ignorance. Out of outrage at the imputation that they and theirs were even part of this epidemic risk?"

Then, Osborne pointed out, there are the limitations of the vaccine itself. Even the best vaccines against relatively simple viruses like yellow fever or measles are only 98 percent effective. HIV, obviously, is a much more formidable opponent than either of these. Many scientists say that the best we can hope for is that the first generation of AIDS vaccine will work in about 70 percent to 75 percent of those inoculated. Moreover, it wouldn't be an all-purpose vaccine. Because HIV is constantly mutating, there are few scientists who believe that it could be defeated with a one-time inoculation, like measles. Rather, it will likely have to be attacked the way influenza is attacked: by making specific vaccines against specific strains and then reimmunizing people whenever new strains emerge. What all of this means is that coming up with a vaccine isn't going to wipe out AIDS. In all likelihood it will do no more than confer temporary protection against some strains of the virus on the part of the population that agrees to be vaccinated.

It is even possible that having a vaccine would be worse than having none at all. In the spring of 1984, when Robert Gallo of the National Institutes of Health made it known that he had developed a blood test to detect HIV, then Secretary of Health and Human Services Margaret Heckler foolishly announced that she felt a vaccine would be ready for clinical testing in two years. According to Osborne, the next day Los Angeles bathhouses that had been empty for months had four-hour waiting lines. This, keep in mind, was on the basis of speculation that a vaccine might be available at some point in the future. If there actually were a vaccine—even a flawed one—one can only imagine how much more dramatic the recalculation of the risks and benefits of unsafe sexual behavior would be. As should be obvious from the condom research, the young, sexually active and less-educated are already in denial over HIV. What better invitation for further denial than a good—but imperfect—vaccine?

This, of course, wouldn't matter for those who are actually protected. But those lives saved might well be offset by an increase in infection among the unprotected 30 percent who, under the assumption that they too were protected, would feel it was safe to abandon whatever safe sexual practices they once followed.

Again there should be nothing surprising about this. Risk homeostasis—the idea that a reduction in risk in one area often triggers a compensatory (and in some cases greater) increase in risky behavior in another—is a well-described concept in the social sciences. In his classic work *Traffic Safety and the Driver*, Leonard Evans recounts that pedestrians are twice as likely to be struck by cars when they cross at marked crosswalks than when they cross at random. Why? Because the extra caution shown by cars approaching crosswalks is more than offset by the assumption of pedestrians that because there are lines on the road they no longer need to look both ways.

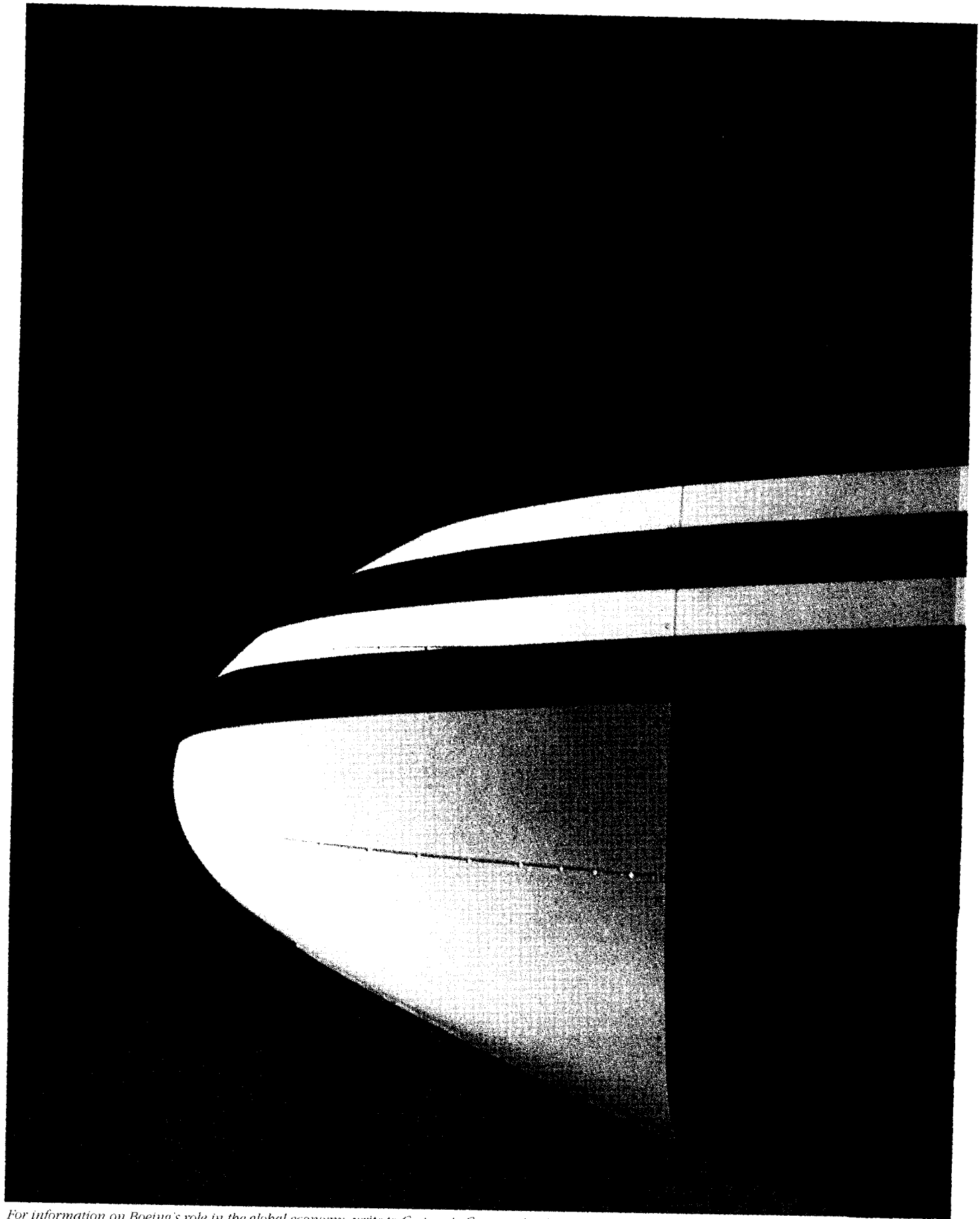
This is not to say that we should not have crosswalks or, for that matter, vaccines. It is to say that a technical advance does not necessarily constitute a solution to a problem. It is to say that spending billions of dollars on AIDS research, like exhorting Americans to practice safe sex, is simply not good enough.

In the end, the problem with AIDS is its singularity. It is too complicated biologically to be tackled by science as easily as, say, leukemia and too complicated behaviorally to be addressed as simply as, say, drunk driving. The epidemic in the United States is not the same as the epidemic in Africa—where it is much more of a heterosexual woman's disease—or the epidemic in Thailand, which appears to be driven by a new and highly virulent strain of HIV known as Type A. Indeed, the AIDS crisis of today hardly resembles the crisis in this country ten years ago. Epidemics are living, moving forces, their appearance as dependent on time and circumstance as their underlying biology. They are, to use a word that has fallen out of fashion in discussion of disease, fundamentally social phenomena.

Consider, for example, the mathematical shorthand used by epidemiologists to express the status of any

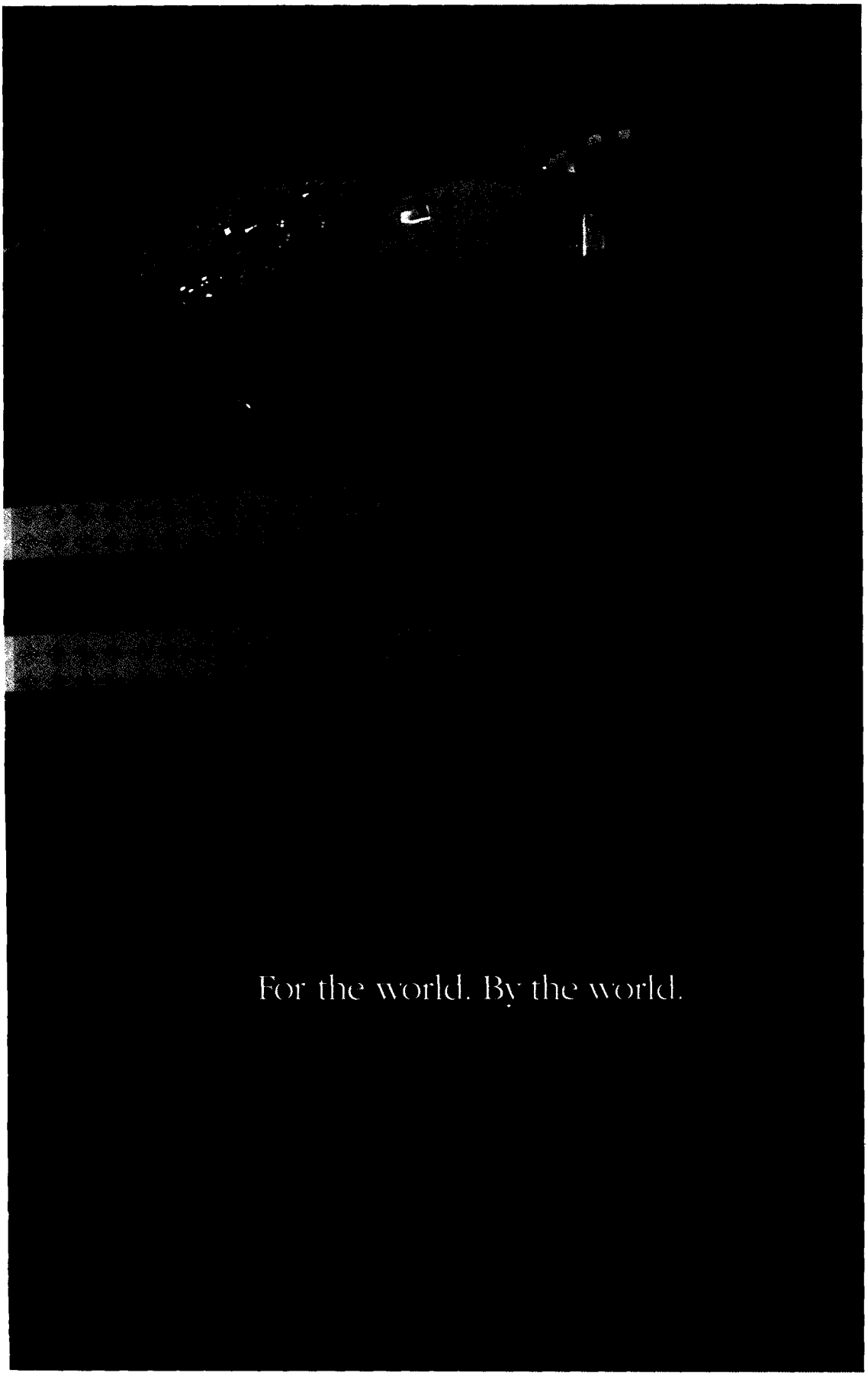
continued on page 26

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



For information on Boeing's role in the global economy, write to Corporate Communications, FW, PO Box 3707, MS 10-06, Seattle, WA 98124-2207.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



Boeing is America's leading exporter, and has been for the last three years. Airlines in more than 140 countries fly Boeing airplanes. But we are a major *customer* as well as a major *supplier.* For example, we buy goods and services from some 30,000 firms with facilities and employees in every state in the U.S. and in 31 nations around the world.

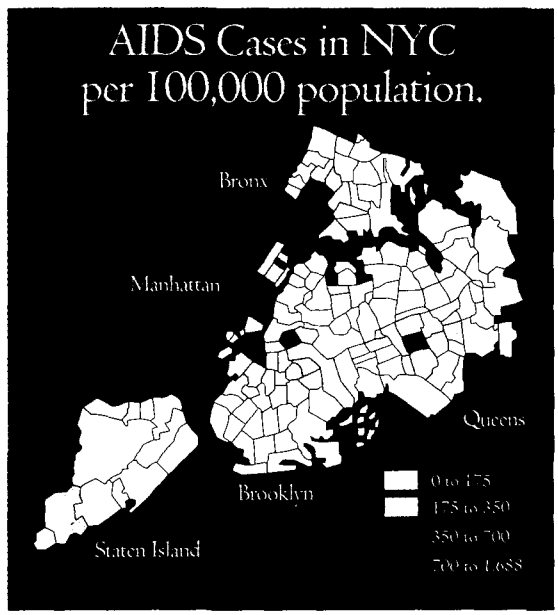
BOEING

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

outbreak of infectious disease. It is the ratio of those who have just been infected by a given agent to those who are no longer infectious: the ratio, in other words, between those newly claimed by a virus and those cured of or killed by it. If that ratio is greater than one—if a disease is infecting more people than it is losing—the epidemic grows. If the ratio is less than one, if more people die or are cured than are newly infected, the epidemic is doomed. No disease—not cholera, not the black plague, not AIDS—can survive if it kills its victims faster than they manage to infect others.

In the early 1980s, as HIV surged through the gay communities of San Francisco and New York, the ratio was at three and four and five. Today, it is at one. About 40,000 new people are infected with HIV each year, and about that many die of the disease in the same period, which is why the total population of infected Americans has remained fairly steady over the past few years at 1 million.

What this means is that the American AIDS epidemic is at a critical juncture. Any change for the worse could push it back into its old expansionist mode. This is not an idle fear. There is now in the Northeast, for example, a resurgence of the heroin use among young adults. Because of the purity of heroin supply at the moment, the drug is generally being sniffed. But if these new users start injecting the drug and sharing needles, then a new cycle of infection could begin.



Source: *The Social Impact of AIDS in the United States*. Albert R. Jonsen & Jeff Stryker, eds.

Another potential threat comes from the growth of infection among the young. The stable epidemic ratio of HIV in the United States is actually a combination of *two separate phenomena: gay males, for whom the* ratio is now much less than one, and young adults, for whom the ratio is much greater than one. In other words, just as the epidemic is contracting among those who have responded to safe sex messages, it is expanding among those least responsive to the call for behavioral changes.

On the other hand, the epidemiological status of HIV presents a tremendous opportunity. Making inroads against HIV need not require some scientific breakthrough or a revolution in the behavior of every sexually active American. It need only involve finding some way to take a bite out of the 40,000 new infections every year, pushing the ratio below one, and letting the same relentless mathematics that created the epidemic work to destroy it.

Donald Des Jarlais, an AIDS expert at Beth Israel Medical Center in New York and perhaps the chief proponent of this kind of social strategy, says that a reasonable goal would be to halve the current yearly total of 40,000 new infections. "If we could do that," he says flatly, "the epidemic would die out."

This, of course, is easier said than done. But it is not impossible, and certainly easier than fighting AIDS by throwing money at scientists and condoms at schoolchildren. To begin with, there is no great mystery about who those 40,000 people are, or where they can be found. For all its much ballyhooed biological mystery, HIV is strikingly predictable in its manifestations. The epidemic, according to a recent report by the National Research Council, is "settling into spatially and socially isolated groups and possibly becoming endemic in them." To find those at risk for AIDS, the report went on, one need only look at where other bacterial and sexually transmitted diseases are epidemic: "zones of urban poverty, poor health, drug addiction and social disintegration." In New York City that translates into no more than six to ten neighborhoods in Greenwich Village, the Upper West Side, Harlem, Washington Heights and the Bronx. Nationwide, those with the greatest probability of being among HIV's yearly victims probably live in no more than several hundred clearly identifiable neighborhoods.

What we should be doing in those neighborhoods are the simple things that reduce people's risk of acquiring HIV. The first is basic health care. HIV, it should be remembered, is not a terribly infectious agent. The rough estimate used by epidemiologists to describe the risk of contracting HIV from unprotected vaginal sex once with a carrier is between 1 in 500 and 1 in 1,000, which makes it substantially less infectious than, say, hepatitis.

People tend to become infected with HIV because they have other sexually transmitted diseases that vastly increase their susceptibility to the virus. Syphilis, herpes and chancroid—the so-called ulcerative STDs—all cause genital lesions that bring to the surface of the skin precisely those cells that HIV likes to infect the most. They give the virus a gateway to the bloodstream. (To a lesser extent gonorrhea and chlamydia also increase the odds of infection.)

Every group hit by the epidemic now—or hit by AIDS in the past—has suffered from a corresponding epidemic of ulcerative sexually transmitted disease. It was true of gay men in San Francisco and New York in the late 1970s. It is true today in Africa, where, according to a paper presented at the Amsterdam conference, more than 75 percent of heterosexual male HIV infections in sub-Saharan Africa and between 20 percent

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and 40 percent of female infections resulted from[ck] the presence of some other sexually transmitted disease.

It is also the case that STDs are epidemic today in American inner cities. Between 1984 and 1990, the time the AIDS virus began to move from white gay communities into disadvantaged neighborhoods, the number of cases of syphilis for black males almost tripled. The number of new cases among black women in that same period almost quadrupled. The number of reported cases of chancroid, once almost unknown in the United States, has increased sevenfold over the past decade. An estimated 4 million Americans suffer from chlamydia; each year there are between 200,000 and 500,000 new cases of genital herpes. These are rates paralleled only by Third World countries.

That this has been allowed to happen during a period when the United States has been under siege by the AIDS virus is little short of criminal. Every one of these diseases is treatable—and in many cases curable—with drugs that are available and relatively inexpensive. Yet in the country's poorest neighborhoods, where these diseases are concentrated, the public health infrastructure that once existed to detect and treat STDs has deteriorated. The government today spends 23 percent less (in constant dollars) on controlling STDs than it did in 1950. In some cities, as many as 25 percent of all those people seeking treatment at publicly funded STD clinics are turned away each day for lack of resources.

Reversing this slide has to be a priority of any revitalized AIDS prevention strategy. According to the Coalition on STDs, a group of public health organizations, this would probably require adding about $110 million to the Centers for Disease Control's current STD budget of $90 million. Considering that the direct and indirect costs of HIV and AIDS in the United States last year amounted to $64 billion, that seems like a small price to pay.

Any targeted AIDS prevention campaign also has to focus on drug use. This is not just a matter of ending needle-sharing among heroin addicts. The problem is with the kind of behavior that all drug use creates. One study published this year, for example, looked at 500 adults in their 20s drawn from drug-infested, inner-city neighborhoods in New York, San Francisco and Miami. The men and women were all what might be considered at risk for HIV. They were poor and largely minority. Many were on public assistance. A sizable percentage had spent time in jail. Condom use was less than ideal. But of the 500, half were crack users and the other half never smoked it—and that made all the difference.

Among the women, for example, the crack users had six times as many sexual partners as the non-crack users. They were five times as likely to have had sex with a drug injector, three times more likely to have had an ulcerative STD and a third less likely to use a condom when they had sex with someone other than their regular partner. To fight crack use in the inner city, in other words, is to fight AIDS. To put a crack addict in drug treatment is to strike at the very heart of the behavior that results in HIV infection.

This much seems obvious, and one would think it would already be incorporated into national and local AIDS prevention programs. It is not. In New York City, funds for drug treatment have just been cut. And nationally, an estimated 2 million to 3 million Americans in need of drug treatment cannot get it, with the problem most acute among those who fall into the socioeconomic and geographic categories at risk for HIV.

Finally, any focused attack on the spread of HIV should involve behavioral modification. Think, for example, what could be done with New York City's intravenous drug users, 50 percent of whom are now HIV infected. Because of that extraordinarily high rate of infection, this group is the principal point of entry of HIV into the younger heterosexual population. Intravenous heroin users, however, are an easily identifiable group. Few are younger than 30 or 35. One AIDS prevention strategy, according to Des Jarlais, may consist of no more than this: telling teenagers and young adults in Harlem, Washington Heights and the Bronx not to have sex with people more than a few years older than themselves, thereby cutting the connection between heroin users and their habitual partners and the next generation. It may not be as effective as telling them to wear a condom. But then again, this is advice they may actually follow.

These strategies all rely on simple things: getting people to educate others in their own community, opening STD clinics in poor neighborhoods with enough doctors to handle demand, coming up with the money to open new drug treatment facilities. None requires a medical breakthrough. What they require instead is that we abandon our insistence that AIDS is a disease like any other. This, of course, is asking a lot. Dressing AIDS up like cancer or heart disease has made it much more politically appealing to a country that might otherwise have forgotten or ignored it. Many AIDS activists, combating the discrimination that accompanies their battle, continue to have good reason to insist that we "Fight AIDS, not people with AIDS," even though that only diverts attention from the fact that HIV is very much a disease of specific people in specific circumstances.

The challenge of the fight against AIDS over the next few years will be to convince Americans to continue to wage war against a disease that will probably never affect them and will only destroy those groups and people that they care least about. Had we the courage to make this argument earlier—to focus on basic health care and drug treatment rather than T.V. commercials for condoms and international conferences for research—there might be more people alive today.

MALCOLM GLADWELL, who covered AIDS for *The Washington Post*, is now the paper's New York bureau chief.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Strip Poker

Paul Auster is a lucky man. The first film version of one of his novels does it justice. Justice may be an odd word to use in connection with an Auster novel; so is luck. Nonetheless, the terms seem to apply, because the film is first class.

Talent applies, too, of course. **The Music of Chance** (I.R.S.) was adapted for the screen by Philip Haas and his wife, Belinda Haas. He then directed, she edited; together they have made a picture that is serenely eccentric, perfectly modeled, exquisitely *seen*. Like Auster's work, it is (choose one) dreamily realistic/realistically dreamlike.

Philip Haas, though American, began professional life in the London theater as an assistant director with the RSC. He moved into film and made a number of documentaries about contemporary artists and about purely ethnic artists, such as Australian aborigines. Belinda Haas, born in Belfast, came to the United States to study journalism, became a T.V. producer, then in 1988 joined with Philip as writer and editor. Auster's novel is their feature film debut. It's the richest American debut, in both accomplishment and promise, since Hal Hartley, Steven Soderbergh and Jim Jarmusch—with all of whom they share an interest in evocative understatement.

About the producers of this picture I'll say only that backers of this enterprise needed courage and devilry. The cinematographer was the Frenchman Bernard Zitzermann, the magician who put Ariane Mnouchkine's *Molière* on film and who has worked with Haas on a documentary. The casting and the look of the production are in such accord that it's almost as if the actors were created by the production designer, Hugo Luczyc-Wyhowski.

Auster's novel begins with a rootless man, James Nashe, a former Boston fireman, who, after inheriting some money, buys a good car and, with no particular plan in mind, simply drives around the United States. (Why, by the way, did the film change his Saab to a BMW?) One day Nashe is en route to New York when he picks up a beaten and bloody young man, Jack Pozzi, who turns out to be a professional card player.

Nashe has about $10,000 left of his inheritance, and with it, he backs Pozzi in a poker game with two rich recluses in a New Jersey mansion. Pozzi and Nashe lose, and are stripped of everything; they agree to work off their debts. The rich men have imported stones from the walls of an Irish castle. The two losers agree to build a wall with those stones in a meadow below the mansion—at a daily rate that will liquidate the debt in three months. During the work, there are extraordinary developments.

If this story sounds mad, then I've outlined it well. The film's triumph—Auster's, to begin with—is to make one step follow another logically, though in conspectus it all seems weirdly askew. The frame-by-frame credence rests with the actors, who never falter. They are led by Mandy Patinkin, impressive as Nashe. From the first glimpse, Patinkin suggests a man with depths to be mined, depths that he himself may not have mined.

Another first glimpse, of James Spader as Pozzi, is a bit unsettling. With his black-dyed hair, his distorted speech, his whining, Spader's first impression is of mere acting. But gradually a man slips in, to make the performance a portrait of that man. Charles Durning, actually working for a change instead of coasting on his corpulence, gives one of the recluses an amusing stern solidity. His partner is the wispy Joel Grey. (The Laurel and Hardy resemblance is noted in the film.) Grey's presence is really all that is needed, and he supplies it reticently. M. Emmet Walsh, as the recluses' caretaker, has just the right servile nastiness (the "It's-not-my-fault-I'm-just-doing-my-job" syndrome). For someone who has just been through the Holocaust Museum, Walsh's performance has a reminiscent ring of camp guards. It's not impossible that this was in Auster's mind.

Auster's mind—*there's* a subject. He is a coolly subversive writer in a delicate and insidious way. Not for Auster any apparent anarchy of form or style: he composes smoothly, the tone is placid. But out of the ordinary texture, strange patterns and forces emerge, as if lovely green trees along the way suddenly reach out to strangle us.

The deceptive word in the title here is "chance": nothing happens in an Auster novel by chance. A man (in an earlier novel) goes for walks along certain Manhattan streets without forethought, and his walks begin to describe certain patterns. In *The Music of Chance* Nashe, near-

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Children of Fate. *Sicilians. A documentary made in 1961 interwoven with one made in 1991 about the same people, to show human flaw and force, grief and grim humor. Engrossing. (Reviewed 6/14/93)* **Un Coeur en Hiver.** *In the Parisian world of music, a man lives without much warmth or engagement yet perfectly contentedly—which no one believes. (6/7/93)* **Much Ado About Nothing.** *Glorious. Four Americans in the cast don't much help, but Emma Thompson and Kenneth Branagh, under Branagh's direction, sail high with the others through this slightly shadowed, bright comedy. (5/10/93)* **The Story of Qiu Ju.** *A light-hearted yet dogged satire on Chinese bureaucracy. A young woman insists on reparations for an injury to her husband—with too satisfactory results. (5/17/93)* **—SK**

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing the end of his freedom to wander, gives a lift to a man who seems to offer a way to extend that freedom. (Two minor points. Nashe spent seven years in the Boston fire department; the recluses made their money seven years ago. Nashe has $10,000 left; there are 10,000 stones in the meadow for the wall. In an Auster novel, these are not accidents.) The encounter has drastic results. The film softens those results, but not without Auster's approval—he himself plays a bit part in the new ending.

What is the source of design in Auster? Smirking gods? I think not. There is no hint in what I've read of his work of the Thornton Wilder syndrome. (Some people are killed, seemingly senselessly, when the bridge of San Luis Rey collapses. We learn subsequently why heaven thought it was time for them to go.) Auster insists that design is a drug. He doesn't say that, whatever our beliefs, fate operates. He says that, whatever our beliefs, his novels exist to supply a fate for the fate-hungry, to demonstrate that, fundamentally, fate and design are desperate human inventions.

In *The Music of Chance* the Joel Grey recluse has constructed a City of the World—something like an architect's model, with figures two inches high, in which everything important in his life is happening simultaneously. While Nashe and Pozzi labor on their wall, the wall is replicated in the model. I think the City of the World is a paradigm of how fascinating yet nonbinding the idea of fate is for Auster. Nashe steals figures of the recluses from the model and subsequently burns them. Result? Nothing that would not otherwise have happened. The model is actually a mockery of design.

All this matches Auster's idea of character. He seems to respect but ultimately to disregard centuries-old procedures of characterization. He begins conventionally enough, then he simply has people behave as he needs them to behave. His gravity of tone lends believability to his overall patterns; that same gravity makes us accept his people as players in his game.

And that gravity of tone informs, synesthetically, Philip Haas's direction, which catches the Austerian wryly grave tone and which is supported by Belinda Haas's astringent editing. Thus they fulfill both the design and the skepticism about design in this fascinating, intelligent, deceptively lucid film. •

Robert Brustein on Theater

Return of the Master

Ingmar Bergman has returned to the Brooklyn Academy of Music to consolidate his supreme position in world theater—and also, inadvertently, to highlight the poverty of the New York stage. Do we have to travel down Flatbush Avenue these days to find genuine examples of integrated theatrical art on brief visits from Sweden? Broadway can boast of award winners and media favorites, but in Manhattan's show shops, either dazzling staging is compromised by preposterous plotting (*Tommy*), or powerful playwriting is obscured by hyperactive performing (*Angels in America*).

Bergman's visions of **Peer Gynt** and **Madame de Sade** highlight everything that's wrong with our theater—its clamor for audience and critical attention, its financial insecurity and aesthetic bankruptcy, its rickety commercial values, its anxious and unstable nature. There is surely an appetite here for theater of high ambition and consummate artistry; at both Bergman productions the overflowing BAM audience was rapt. It's just that we don't trust the public anymore. We're no longer convinced that a truly serious theater has any future.

No such doubts trouble Ingmar Bergman, who proceeds along his artistic path with high confidence and total dedication. His four-hour *Peer Gynt* is spellbinding in its various components, not least in the way it displays the certainty of a master. Bergman's recent treatment of classical writers almost amounts to co-authorship. Faithful to the spirit of the plays, he nevertheless invents fresh metaphorical entryways into their mysteries. For Henrik Ibsen, the Beethoven of modern drama, he has devised a symphony of brass and kettle drums, staging the entire action of *Peer Gynt* within a domestic Scandinavian room dominated by a central wooden platform that rises, flips and falls to accommodate a variety of settings.

When the boyish Peer first appears to charm and chivy his adoring mother, Ase, he is played by a middle-aged actor, Börje Ahlstedt, the memorable lead in *Fanny and Alexander*. Directors have found various ways to cope with Peer's radical physical changes (he ages some fifty years in the course of five acts). Some, such as Liviu Ciulei at the Guthrie, have used three different actors. Others, such as Patrice Chereau in the Théâtre de Ville production, have stuck to one young actor and grizzled him. Still others, such as Mark Lamos at the Hartford Stage, have cast a young man without bothering to age him at all. Bergman's Peer is having a midlife crisis throughout the entire play.

Ahlstedt's oafish physique and buffoonish features at first make him look like an extra in a Hal Roach comedy, but when he dons a rumpled black felt hat and hunkers down, he transforms into Beckett's Estragon. (Chereau's Peer, Gerard Desarthe, had affinities with Beckett's Lucky.) Ahlstedt's ample belly burgeoning under a boiled shirt and his oxlike carriage endow him with a carnality seemingly at odds with conventional notions of Ibsen's charming fabulist. Yet, by contrast with his boorish neighbors, he's almost ethereal. Bergman has imagined a savage, animalistic rural society not unlike the Breughel-like world of *Virgin Spring*, where rape and violence are endemic. Peer is a rapist, too, but at least he has a large imagination (he could have been an artist were he not so self-infatuated). As for Ase (played by Bib Andersson, lovely and youthful despite a mop of spiky gray hair) and Solveig (played by the tender Lena Endre), these women are islands of innocence in a coarse, threatening firmament.

It is a world where trolls are only a natural extension of the general inhumanity. The Troll King's daughter, like the rest of her clan, is bathed in an eerie green light and sports a phallic tail. Pulling a rubberized penis out of his trousers, Peer takes her brutally from behind (she shortly gives birth on stage to a full-grown monster). Later, when she accosts him by grabbing his balls, he sinks an ax in her head. Still, the curious thing is how Bergman's depiction of this rampant bestiality conceals a deeper tenderness, as if extremes of feeling can only coexist with extremes of cruelty. Ase's death scene—Peer drives her to heaven like a coachman (and characteristically doesn't stay for the funeral)—is by far the gentlest and most compassionate rendering of this famous moment I have yet to witness.

In Act IV Ahlstedt embodies perfectly Peer's development into a callous capitalist, selling arms to the Turks in their war against the Greeks (doubtless he would have backed the Serbs as well). Ahlstedt remains comically complacent right up until the madhouse encounter, the moment when lunatics are declared sane

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

because "what we call common sense expired yesterday, at 11 p.m." (a fair description of America in the '90s). It is at this point that Peer discovers that absolute absorption with self, which we call narcissism, is a form of absolute insanity.

Bergman's final act is not as compelling or surprising as the first four. The pacing decelerates into a series of monologues, and the Button Molder is presented, not very originally, as an old man in uniform carrying a huge casting ladle. (I prefer Chereau's image of a skinny wraith paring his long fingernails.) Still, the final Pietà is exquisite, with Peer curling up in (blind) Solveig's lap while the Button Molder is backlit in the doorway. It is women who save Peer, just as women have always saved Bergman, and it is women who drop the anchor of compassion into these turbulent, inhuman seas.

Women also take center stage in Bergman's treatment of Yukio Mishima's *Madame de Sade*, five noblewomen and a servant giving performances of comparable grace and majesty. I have always considered this piece unplayable, the static declamations of a writer with no real feeling for the stage. Mishima boasted that he "felt obliged to dispense entirely with the usual, trivial stage effects, and to control the action exclusively by the dialogue; collisions of ideas had to create the shapes of the drama, and sentiments had to be paraded throughout in the garb of reason." What he is describing is closet drama. Bergman, without disguising the disquisitory nature of the play, has skillfully managed to pull it out of the closet.

Mishima's theatrical objective was to speculate on why Madame de Sade, devoted to her husband during his eighteen years of imprisonment, abandoned him at the moment he was freed. His philosophical purpose, however, was to probe the beliefs of a famous historical figure without ever bringing him on stage. (At the door near the end, he is turned away by his wife.) Clearly, Mishima felt some deep affinity with this sacred monster who established sexual cruelty as a new divinity.

Alphonse, Marquis de Sade, "a kind of music with only one theme," engages in the most exquisite forms of torture and perversion. He corrupts the sister of his wife. He can only enjoy sex through pain, in groups of threes and fours, or by profaning religious sacraments. Mishima's fictional Countess de Sain-Fond describes how she participated in a black mass with a crucifix between her breasts and a chalice between her thighs while the blood of a lamb cascaded over her body. Like the Marquise de Merteuil in Duclos's *Liaisons Dangereuses*, she is the female embodiment of the link between refinement and corruption: "Alphonse is myself," she realizes, "the bloodstained abortion of God, who can become himself only by escaping from himself." His wife suffers all this, and even abets it, because she is determined to be as devoted as he is debauched—until he memorializes his crimes in a series of shameless novels.

The way Bergman approaches this decadent philosophical treatise is by turning it into parallel forms of art—a Bourbon painting, an eighteenth-century saraband, but also an exercise in Japanese theater. For just as Mishima projected his samurai imagination into French history and culture, so Bergman projects his own into the Orient. The setting by Charles Koroly is a series of simple arches, with Japanese prints of flowers, fire and clouds projected on a cyclorama. Koroly's lovely brocaded gowns are sometimes adorned with Japanese ideograms (the nuns wear obis under their habits). The music is played on Japanese instruments. And the acting proceeds in that stately, deliberately mincing style associated with Japanese theater. When a character raises her fan overhead, she could be either an actor on a kabuki stage or a figure in a painting by Watteau.

Bergman, in short, has found that undiscovered country where one culture merges gracefully with another. He has also managed to merge periods and centuries. As the action proceeds through eighteen years—years that take their toll on the young and old women alike—we are catapulted into modern times. Madame de Sade's sister enters in a mink coat and hat and lights a cigarette off a coal-burning stove. And the pastel silk gowns of youth are replaced by heavy dark wools, almost Slavic in their style. The Bastille has been stormed. The revolution has begun. The Countess de Sain-Fond, killed in a demonstration while masquerading as a prostitute, becomes the legendary whore of the Revolution, like Genet's Chantal. And the housekeeper, who has been hovering discreetly in the shadows throughout the play, either awaiting service or eavesdropping on the family, has now turned surly and insolent, preparing to deliver these tainted aristocrats over to the guillotine.

All this, as Mishima promised, is pure dialogue. Physical action is usually limited to a character raising a fan or striking a riding crop against her palm. The women speak facing the audience, like a chorus line of porcelain statuettes, or circle each other like panthers, and if anyone makes a sudden move, it's a violent event (the audience starts visibly at the exposure of an ivory breast). We grow intent on the curl of a smile, the raising of an eyebrow, a ruby at the base of a neck, the well-coiffed wigs, the variety of physical insults performed by the Marquis. Bergman has created this subtle stillness as a way of making us look and listen.

And we are attending to six truly accomplished actresses—some young, some old, all beautiful except the sullen servant—who radiate an inner calm and tranquillity. Mishima's feminine world of elegance and sophistication represents a vivid contrast to the brutal masculine world of *Peer Gynt*. Yet both works illuminate the dark corners of the human heart, a purpose amounting almost to an obsession in Bergman's later years. That he has the will to concentrate on this theme makes him the ideal interpreter of Ibsen and Mishima as well as Strindberg, O'Neill and much of Shakespeare. To enjoy the privilege of having him on our shores again restores our faith in a provisional art. •

Stagestruck

BY JAMES Q. WILSON

Picture Perfect: The Art and Artifice of Public Image Making by Kiku Adatto

(Basic Books, 200 pp., $20)

In May 1990, Kiku Adatto published in this magazine an article in which she revealed that the average length of a presidential statement on a network evening news broadcast fell from forty-two seconds in 1968 to less than ten seconds in 1988. The three major networks gave to George Bush and Michael Dukakis only one-fourth as much time to present their views in their own words as the networks had given to Richard Nixon, Hubert Humphrey and George Wallace. And not only was the average

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sound bite vastly shorter in 1988 than twenty years earlier, the chance for a candidate to make any lengthy statement had all but disappeared. In 1968 nearly half of all sound bites lasted forty seconds or more; in 1988 only 1 percent were that long. Nixon and Humphrey could be heard making a statement at least thirty seconds long on 162 different occasions; Bush and Dukakis could be heard for that long only fifteen times.

Adatto's article attracted a great deal of attention and precipitated much soul-searching within the networks. Several leading executives promised that in 1992 things would be different: the news broadcasts would return to covering "the issues" and would lengthen the bites. But the promises were empty. In 1992 the shrinking sound bite continued to shrink: Bush and Clinton could be heard, on the average, for less than nine seconds at a time. And so the candidates and their handlers, realizing that the evening news would no longer provide them with a forum for setting forth their views, took their cases to other forums. They went to the talk shows and the television magazines, where they found that Larry King, Phil Donahue, Arsenio Hall and the "Today," "Good Morning America" and "This Morning" shows would give them time (in some cases, an hour or more) in which to present themselves.

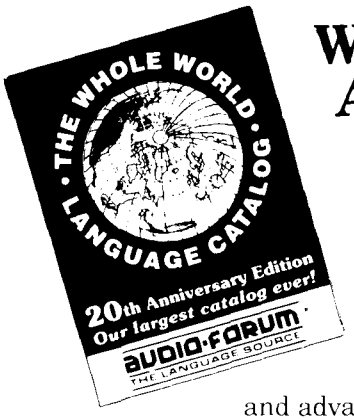
Why did the sound bite shrink? To find an explanation, one must first understand how the networks filled up the airtime they once gave to candidate speeches. Briefly, they replaced talking candidates with talking reporters and anchormen. In 1968 the candidates could be heard for 84 percent of the time that their pictures were on the screen; in 1988 they could be heard for only 37 percent of this time. The rest of the time the viewer would see the candidate but hear Dan Rather, Tom Brokaw, Peter Jennings or their staff reporters. And often they would not even see the candidate: the reporter who was marginally present in 1968 was often the center of attention in 1988.

In her book, which restates and expands on these findings, Adatto explores how these reporters used their greatly enlarged visibility. Perhaps the shrinking sound bite would not be a problem if the journalists spent their growing airtime carefully summarizing the candidates' views and analyzing the fit between those views and the facts of some policy issue. But no. What the reporters tended to do was to comment on the image-making efforts of the candidates and their managers. They did not become policy analysts, they became theater critics.

In 1968 no network news broadcast ran an excerpt from a candidate's television advertising and then discussed it in terms of image-making. In 1988 this was done 125 times. Sometimes—as with the famous footage of Dukakis riding in an Army tank or in the pro-Bush ad alluding to the furlough of prisoners from a Massachusetts prison—the network news programs ran and commented on the footage so frequently that these pictures became campaign themes. The networks by their coverage created images that defined what the campaign was about.

But that image definition had little to do with reality. Dukakis's tank ride was a bad idea and his managers were idiots to have staged it, but it said nothing about his views on military policy. The Bush campaign's "Willie Horton ad," it is often forgotten, never mentioned Horton or showed a picture of him; it showed men dressed as convicts moving through a revolving door while the narrator criticized Dukakis's prison furlough program. But when the networks decided to make the ad a symbol of the Bush campaign, they linked it with pictures of Horton and made it clear that he was a black man who had raped a white woman while on furlough from a Massachusetts prison. And having made

Cassette Courses in 80 Languages



World-Famous Audio-Forum Self-Instructional Language Courses

We offer comprehensive audio-cassette/book courses at beginning and advanced levels, plus many special-purpose programs, including medical and business courses, and courses for young children. We have foreign-language mystery dramas, dialogs recorded in Paris, and ethnic music from around the world. Computer programs and videos also. Our new 52-page catalog is yours for the asking — just call, write or fax. Our 20th year.

Afrikaans	German	Lenape	Slovak
Albanian	Greek	Lithuanian	Southern Sotho
Amharic	Haitian Creole	Malay	Spanish
Arabic	Hausa	Mandarin	Swahili
Armenian	Hawaiian	Moré	Swedish
Bulgarian	Hebrew	Navajo	Tagalog
Burmese	Hindi	Northern Sotho	Telugu
Cantonese	Hungarian	Norwegian	Thai
Cherokee	Icelandic	Passamaquoddy	Tibetan
Chinese	Igbo	Persian	Tswana
Chinyanja	Indonesian	Polish	Turkish
Czech	Irish	Portuguese	Twi
Danish	Italian	Romanian	Ukrainian
Dutch	Japanese	Russian	Urdu
English	Khmer	Sanskrit	Vietnamese
Esperanto	Kirundi	Scots Gaelic	Welsh
Estonian	Korean	Serbo-Croatian	Xhosa
Finnish	Lakota	Shona	Yiddish
French	Latin	Sign Language	Yoruba
Fula	Latvian	Sinhalese	Zulu

Separate English as a Second Language Catalog also available.

AUDIO-FORUM®
THE LANGUAGE SOURCE

Audio-Forum,
Room K647, 96 Broad St.,
Guilford, CT 06437 U.S.A., (203) 453-9794
Tel: 1-800-662-5180 • Fax: (203) 453-9774

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the linkage between Horton and the ad, the networks were then free to criticize Bush for "racist" campaign tactics. This linkage may have hurt Bush in the eyes of some viewers, but it probably helped him in the eyes of even more. Ironically, the networks may have boosted Bush by becoming theater critics, even as they thought they were exposing him.

Despite their desire to expose ads, images, staging and "spin control," the networks rarely assessed the veracity of what they revealed. In less than 8 percent of the cases, Adatto reports, did a reporter comment on the accuracy or the inaccuracy of the ads. Television reporters, in her view, are caught in a dilemma of their own making: they are desperately eager to get exciting scenes on film at the same time that they are convinced that campaigning has become an image-manipulating sham. Persuaded that politics has become theater, the networks emphasize the theatricality of politics, thereby giving campaign managers even more incentive to stage theatrical events for the cameras.

Why did this happen, and what effect has it had? Adatto has relatively little to say about these matters. I find that puzzling; her superb analysis of the facts leads naturally to issues of causality and consequences that she partly sidesteps. She is chiefly interested in images and the meaning of images. Her doctoral dissertation, "American Fantasy: Social Conflicts and Social Myths in Films of the 1970s," was an account of the maverick hero—Rambo, John Wayne, Superman, Indiana Jones and Hawkeye Pierce and Trapper John in *M.A.S.H.* By making the dissertation the basis of the fifth chapter of her book, she leads the reader away from why and with what effect the sound bite shrank, and toward our well-known fascination with movies that portray the lonely hero reluctantly drawn into the service of communal ideals that the community itself is unwilling to defend (or, in *High Noon*, even to believe). And to prepare the way for this insertion of a condensed dissertation, she tells in her fourth chapter how motion pictures depict television (as in *Network*) and how arty photographers have shown scenes of everyday life in ways designed to emphasize the deformity or hypocrisy of that life. These two chapters may be the heart of an interesting book, but not the book that she began to write in her first three chapters.

Still, Adatto provides several clues as to why network news has increasingly treated presidential campaigns as artifice and, by so doing, has made them even more artificial. I can discern at least four possible explanations, distinct but probably related.

The first is glamour and status. Anchormen and reporters have become celebrities in a celebrity-oriented culture. Many of them earn large sums of money; their faces leap out from magazine pages as well as television screens; they are invited for private briefings at the White House; their presence at a Washington or New York party can raise it high in the social firmament. They have become, in short, part of the stories they cover.

Celebrated people will seek out opportunities to sustain the celebration. Theatrical personalities themselves, they will tend to see the world in theatrical terms. The network anchormen and anchorwomen are especially vulnerable to this perspective, for the demands on their time and the status that they enjoy make it all but impossible for them to be real reporters. At best they may write their own copy, but rarely do they gather the news that informs that copy. Of late they have traveled much to distant places to "report" what is happening there, but I doubt that the reporting involves much more than carefully orchestrated meetings with heads of state coupled with "stand-ups" in front of visually compelling scenes.

If they are to be on camera more than presidents or presidential candidates, what are they to say? Not trenchant comments on the complexities of public policy. Even if they have the knowledge to make more than banal comments, which is unlikely, they do not have the time to do so. The anchors may have grabbed center stage, but for them, as well as for the candidates they cover, the director is always yelling "cut." Their sound bites, too, must be short. Presidents may not get to say much on the network news, but then neither does anybody else. In this state of affairs, the easiest and least offensive thing to do is to point—with an adjective, a phrase, an arched eyebrow—toward the clay feet of the officials they cover.

Second, television news is big business. Begun in the 1950s as a loss leader—a public service activity done to satisfy FCC requirements as much as anything else—it has become, as Adatto reports, a profit center in each network. Many experienced news producers like to contrast the good old days, when they did not feel acute pressure to stage audience-maximizing news broadcasts, with today, when they do. This is romantic exaggeration, but it contains some truth. Walter Cronkite was once the dominant news broadcaster, but he alone could not create a profitable audience. Edward Jay Epstein, an acute student of television news, has recalled the time in 1972 when CBS changed from one affiliate to another in Boston, and the audience for Cronkite and CBS News fell by almost 40 percent. Bostonians, like people in most cities, watched a local station based on its total programming package, especially the lead-in programming to the news broadcast. Change the package and you change the audience, Cronkite or not.

In those days there was a concern about ratings, but it was not yet an obsession. Today network television is being squeezed by many competitors—new networks (CNN, Fox), videotapes, satellite dishes and a proliferation of special-interest magazines. Under these circumstances, every contribution to "market share" is vitally important, and the newsroom is no exception. In a highly competitive environment that is rich in information, anyone who aspires to reach a mass market (as opposed to, say, the market for this magazine) must find a mass theme into which they can tap with visually dramatic, quick-tempo messages. In politics the theme is obvious: politics is a corrupt, self-serving enterprise. Opinion polls since the mid-1960s have steadily shown a decline in public confidence in almost all American institutions, with the political ones leading the way downward. If Americans believe that politics is self-interest dressed up by Madison Avenue hucksters with slick, spin-controlled images, then that is what network news will confirm.

Facilitating that market-oriented strategy has been a third change—the technological improvement in the way in which images are gathered, transmitted and edited. In the "old" days—the 1970s!—images were gathered on film, developed in laboratories, transmitted over coaxial cables and painstakingly edited by hand. Today images are gathered electronically, transmitted by satellite and edited on computers. Now any bit of imagery can be made instantly available almost anywhere for almost any purpose. As a result news producers have more freedom to construct their broadcasts. When Nixon or Humphrey made a speech, the networks got a film of it; the only real decision was which section of it should be run and whether it should go for thirty, sixty or ninety seconds. When Bush and Clinton made a speech, the producers could mix a rapid-fire sequence of images of the candidate, the crowds, the reporter, the background and the staging under a reporter's narration of "the event."

Some television reporters claim that these new techniques simply reflect the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

demand by the viewers for quick, fast-paced information. Adatto quotes Tom Bettag, who has produced "CBS Evening News with Dan Rather," asserting that "people became used to a much faster pace of information" and acquired a greater ability to absorb visual information. Susan Zirinsky, another news producer, makes the same point: modern technology makes it possible for the networks to put out a better product, using a few words of a candidate's speech, not to convey information, but as "natural sound" that reveals the candidate's "rhythm and mood."

By the standards of Bettag and Zirinsky, then, the people who stood in the sun for three hours to hear Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas were premodern dolts, unable to "absorb" "fast-paced" "natural sound." Had they been around at the time, NBC and CBS would have covered the Lincoln-Douglas debates by juxtaposing quick sound bites—"a house divided cannot stand!" "popular sovereignty!"—over catchy images of black slaves and Kansas Free-Soilers, accompanied by a reporter remarking that Lincoln's handlers have not yet managed to get him to speak in a lower register, while Douglas's people are rumored to have purchased elevator shoes for The Little Giant.

The fourth explanation concerns the opinions of the media itself. Everyone knows that the members of the national media are well to the left of the average voter. This does not mean that they will *always* provide biased coverage of a presidential campaign. Other considerations—standards of fairness, a readiness to expose a scandal regardless of who is involved, a desire to avoid offending an audience or the owners of local affiliates—will play a role. (In 1992, however, these other considerations played almost no role at all; the pro-Clinton bias of the press was evident at almost every stage of the campaign, save for his early problems with questions about the draft.) Ideology exists, but most reporters, though liberals, are not ideologues, and ideology can be combated by public pressure.

But there is another attitude of the media that is less well-remarked and less likely to be exposed to counterpressures. That is its cynicism. One of the most interesting findings of Adatto's research was the importance of Joe McGinniss's book *The Selling of the President*. Published shortly after the 1968 campaign, the book argued that politics in the television age was all about image-making. Ted Koppel recalls its impact this way:

> All of a sudden everybody said, "Oh I get it. They're trying to sell candidates the way they sell soap." And from that moment on, we had emerged from the Garden of Eden. We were never able to see candidates or campaigns quite the same way again.

Bettag makes the same point in his interview with Adatto. "Packaging is important, and Joe McGinniss's book was the first time a lot of us thought about that."

We know that the press became more adversarial after Vietnam, Watergate and the Nixon presidency. But perhaps "adversarial" is not quite the right description. They became not so much opposed to politicians and the government as contemptuous of them. Politics, they decided, was about lying. (Paul Weaver will soon publish a book on this theme.) The rise in cynicism can almost be quantified. In 1968, Adatto notes, there was only one network news broadcast that focused on a gaffe—a misspoken word, a misstated idea, a clumsy move. In 1988 there were twenty-nine.

Again, this is not merely liberal ideology at work. If ideology were all that was involved, Bush's gaffes would have been reported and Dukakis's ignored; or, better yet, there would have been an attack on Bush's policies, whether well or poorly stated. In 1968 Spiro Agnew mistakenly said "Richard Nixon" when he meant "Hubert Humphrey" in condemning those who would appease military aggression. The slip, quickly corrected, was never reported. It was not thought to be news. Within a few years, however, reporters seized upon Ford slipping down some stairs, Bush getting the date of Pearl Harbor wrong and Dukakis dropping a fly ball while playing catch with a Boston Red Sox player.

The shift in orientation was not lost on the political professionals. Roger Ailes summarizes his knowledge of campaign coverage this way:

> Let's face it, there are three things that the media are interested in: pictures, mistakes and attacks. It's my orchestra-pit theory of politics. If you have two guys on a stage and one guy says, "I have a solution to the Middle East problem," and the other guy falls into the orchestra pit, who do you think is going to be on the evening news?

This change is not confined to television. Many of the national newsmagazines, from *Time* to *Insight*, have become recorders of scandals, blunders and devious motives. The national political press increasingly covers politics the same way *People* magazine covers entertainment, as a clutter of personalities, each of whom has a dark secret.

The cynicism of the press does not

continued on page 36

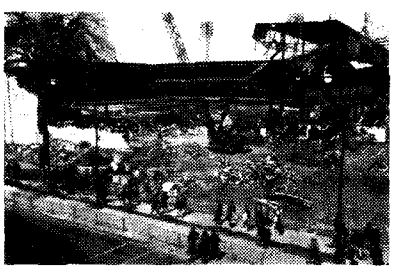
- Sports franchises aren't major employers.
- They don't bring in significant revenues for cities.
- But when team owners play hardball with civic leaders, guess who wins?

Playing the Field

WHY SPORTS TEAMS MOVE AND CITIES FIGHT TO KEEP THEM

CHARLES C. EUCHNER

"Euchner's landmark work . . . shows why teams always have the upper hand in confrontations with cities, why politicians cave in to teams, and why taxpayers inevitably lose."—Eliot Cohen, *Washington City Paper*

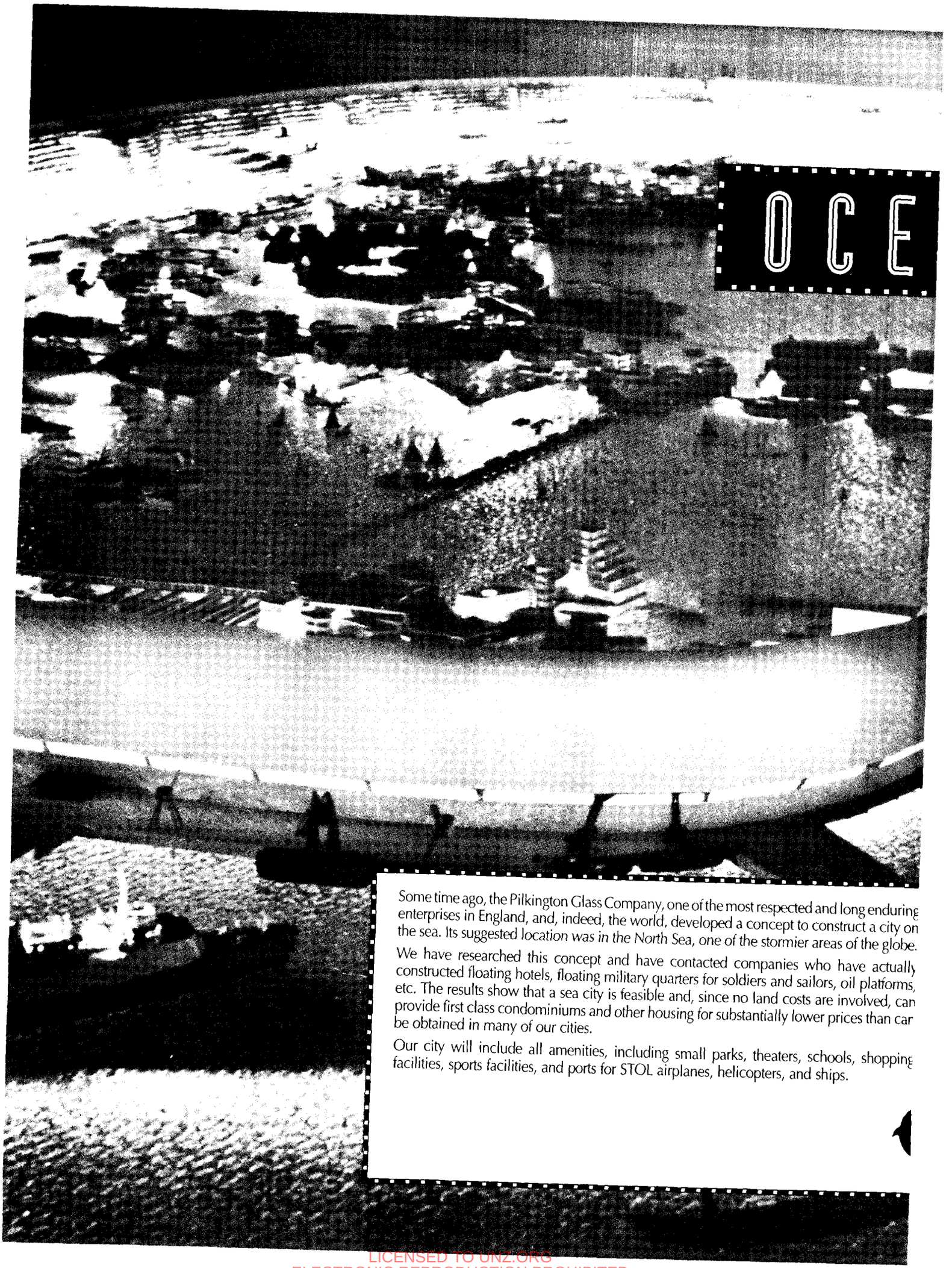


If you build it, we might stay.
Demolition of old Comiskey Park, Chicago.

$24.95

Available at your bookstore or call 1-800-537-5487.
THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY PRESS
Hampden Station, Baltimore, Maryland 21211

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



OCE

Some time ago, the Pilkington Glass Company, one of the most respected and long enduring enterprises in England, and, indeed, the world, developed a concept to construct a city on the sea. Its suggested location was in the North Sea, one of the stormier areas of the globe.

We have researched this concept and have contacted companies who have actually constructed floating hotels, floating military quarters for soldiers and sailors, oil platforms, etc. The results show that a sea city is feasible and, since no land costs are involved, can provide first class condominiums and other housing for substantially lower prices than can be obtained in many of our cities.

Our city will include all amenities, including small parks, theaters, schools, shopping facilities, sports facilities, and ports for STOL airplanes, helicopters, and ships.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Using this futuristic concept we can break the chains which bind us to land, together with the chains that bind us to the system of government which has become perhaps irreversibly entangled in bureaucracy, corruption, and the free lunch philosophy. Forget the old fashioned idea of leasing land from another country, let us create our "land" instead.

In our new country, OCEANIA, we can practice genuine free enterprise, enjoying true freedom in the tradition envisioned by Von Mises, Hayek, and Rand.

Here is a picture of the Pilkington concept. To learn how YOU can live in OCEANIA, located outside of the hurricane belt, in a commercially viable area with good climate, contact:

The Atlantis Project. 4132 S. Rainbow Blvd. #388, Las Vegas, NV 89103 (702) 897-8320

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

merely reflect the growth of cynicism among the public. To some degree, I suspect, it also causes it. If the press doesn't like Ross Perot, it ought to consider the possibility that it helped to create him, this allegedly maverick hero who wages a solitary fight to root out the corruption of the system. He is shorter than Gary Cooper, weaker than John Wayne and uglier than Harrison Ford, but he is a great character actor, and he captures all their spirits very nicely. The press and the public reinforce each other's views in a process that might be called symbiotic cynicism.

Some time ago Michael Robinson published data suggesting that people who watched television the most were the most cynical about politics. There are a lot of unknowns in such a correlation: people who watch a lot of television are different from others in many ways that precede their viewing habits. But it remains an intriguing possibility. If it is true, then the problem is not just political hucksterism, it is the relentless portrayal of politics as hucksterism.

In such a context, Adatto thinks the candidates' shift to talk shows as the vehicle for reaching their audience makes sense not only for them, but also for us. She is right. Let us bear all of this in mind when reporters next complain that being on a talk show shields candidates from the "tough questions" of the "knowledgeable reporters." The complaint has rather a hollow ring when one realizes that the "tough questions" are designed mostly to produce a gaffe or an attack, and that many of the "knowledgeable reporters" mostly know what it is that will get them a shot at doing a stand-up in front of a compelling image or a voice-over for a misplayed fly ball.

JAMES Q. WILSON's new book, *The Moral Sense*, will be published in July by the Free Press.

Take the Money and Run

BY MICHAEL LEWIS

The Outlaw Bank: A Wild Ride into the Secret Heart of BCCI by Jonathan Beaty and S. C. Gwynne

(Random House, 399 pp., $25)

False Profits: The Inside Story of BCCI, the World's Most Corrupt Financial Empire by Peter Truell and Larry Gurwin

(Houghton Mifflin, 522 pp., $24.95)

The story told by these absorbing books is so implausible that it is only fair to begin by listing a few of its more sensational twists, as a kind of down payment on the reader's credulity. When BCCI was closed down by authorities around the world on July 5, 1991, it was found to be short $10 billion. The Manhattan district attorney, who instigated the closure, described it accurately as "the largest bank fraud in world financial history." He claimed that sixteen people had died as a result of various investigations of the bank. An American freelance journalist following a lead on BCCI was found in a bathtub of blood in West Virginia. A reporter for the *Sunday Times* of London, who ignored warnings in 1983 to avoid the BCCI story, was beaten and knifed. The violence went hand in glove with the bank's money laundering, weapons dealing, child prostitution, Third World graft and espionage. BCCI may have given American military secrets to the Soviet Union and assembled a nuclear bomb in Pakistan. Among its clients were Marcos, Noriega, Saddam, just about every crook in Africa and the CIA.

Oddly enough, its prominence in the darker corners of world commerce did not prevent BCCI from acquiring a certain kind of respectability. The bank was a trusted friend to Jimmy Carter, Jesse Jackson, John Tower, John Connolly, Bert Lance, Andrew Young, John Culver, Orrin Hatch, James Callaghan and Clark Clifford and Robert Altman. It was ostracized by American bank regulators, but it was embraced by some American bankers. Bank of America was its original investor in the early 1970s; and until the late 1980s BCCI was a large and valued client of many firms on Wall Street, including Goldman Sachs and Salomon Brothers.

At Salomon Brothers, as it happens, I observed and assisted in some of the bank's more lunatic activities. As the new man on the trading desk at Salomon Brothers in 1986, I was made to hang around late at night to answer the nervous calls from a young woman at BCCI in London. She clearly had even less of an idea of what she was doing than I did: she said billions when she meant millions and buy when she meant sell. She placed enormous bets in the market for U.S. Treasury bond options, and over eighteen months lost a couple of hundred million dollars. (It turned out that she was central to a complicated accounting fraud.) Everyone knew that she should be stopped, but no one wanted to stop her, since her business was lucrative.

In short, the putative forces of light had nearly as much use for BCCI as the obvious forces of darkness. For nearly twenty years the bank—which was really more of a diversified secret society—was able to play both sides of the moral and geopolitical fence in the most extraordinary ways. "We serve a purpose for society and humanity at large, absolutely without any consideration or bias toward caste, creed, color, religion or race," the BCCI in-house magazine explained to a credulous audience. "This is the distinction between us and other business institutions." How true. On the one hand it sold nuclear fuel air triggers (whatever those may be) to Saddam Hussein. On the other there is this gorgeous anecdote served up by a Pakistani weapons dealer (and confirmed by others) in *The Outlaw Bank*:

> You remember the victorious allied march to retake Kuwait City? It was spearheaded by a contingent of Kuwaiti tanks, which was considered a political rather than a military necessity. However, there was a difficulty executing the plan. The Kuwaitis had no tanks. BCCI was able to solve the problem: they already had a factory order in for new and retrofitted Yugoslavian M-84 battle tanks—that's an upgraded version of the Soviet T-72—for another contract, but they shifted orders to supply the Desert Storm request. BCCI supplied, I think it was, sixty-four such tanks, financing the package and handling the shipping to the coalition forces. And since the Kuwaitis weren't familiar with this tank, they supplied East European personnel to maintain and drive the tanks—I believe most were Czechoslovakian. The Kuwaitis rode on top of the tanks and waved.

The only real logic to BCCI was that it blossomed wherever people in power

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

could be corrupted, and so it turned up just about everywhere. For that reason, however, narratives about the bank face the problem of focus. The plot is so thick that it is indigestible. These books, both truly marvelous pieces of investigative reporting, address the problem by concentrating on the bank's American activities; but after that they have almost nothing in common. Peter Truell and Larry Gurwin, who covered the story for *The Wall Street Journal* and *Regardie's* magazine, have composed a crisp, detailed, workmanlike chronology. They rely on fewer anonymous sources and offer fewer sensational revelations than their competitors do. Thus, they name a source whom Jonathan Beaty and S. C. Gwynne disguise to prevent him from being killed. (Oops.) *False Profits* is the book for the assassin in need of direction, and for people who prefer their finance neat.

Beaty and Gwynne, who broke important fragments of the BCCI story in *Time*, have written a book for the masses. They have put themselves at the center of what will no doubt be a bad movie about a pair of investigative reporters on the trail of an evil empire. There are a number of sentences like this one: "Gwynne, a scotch and soda in hand, sat on the edge of the bed and warily watched as Beaty paced the room." They have colored in their colleagues at *Time* as Hollywood stock types: the gruff newsroom boss, the gruff boss's assistant who feigns irritation but is deep down charmed by the rakish reporters and so on. What makes all of this truly offensive, however, is that it works. The rakish reporters have laid out the story with about as much verve and clarity as it permits.

The Bank of Credit and Commerce International was founded in 1972 by an ambitious Pakistani named Agha Hasan Abedi. He was short on experience and long on the sort of charm that consists of telling people what they want to hear and giving people what they dare not ask for. He was credible as a moneyman mainly because he was friends with a man who had a lot of money. To Abedi—as to his friend Clifford—business was merely a synonym for connections. His first important connection was with the ruler of Abu Dhabi, Sultan bin Zayed, known also as the Jed Clampitt of the Middle East. It was Zayed's special combination of ignorance, guile, Islamic solidarity and wariness of Westerners that made BCCI possible. *False Profits* offers this delicious and possibly misleading glimpse of Zayed, recently transformed from a romping, stomping bedouin sitting on top of a camel to a fat cat sitting on top of a meaningful portion of the world's supply of crude oil generating an income—an income!—of $30 billion a year:

> After his ascension, Zayed's monies and gold bars mostly remained . . . in a storeroom of a traditional clay fort in Abu Dhabi. Rats had eaten the notes there, some of which dated from Queen Victoria's time, or so the story goes. With great reluctance, Zayed finally agreed to have his funds removed from the palace in Land Rovers and taken to a branch of the British bank of the Middle East (virtually the only bank in the country) with a musket-toting tribesman riding on top of each vehicle. To the consternation of the bank's staff, Zayed appeared several days later, unannounced, demanding to see his money. Apparently it took a couple of days and an emergency flight from Bahrain to assemble sufficient funds.

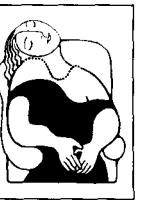
Zayed's seemingly foolhardy endorsement enabled BCCI to grow quickly, first by lending to shaky Arab enterprises and then by bribing Third World government officials into letting the bank exploit their fellow citizens. Since the bribes often consisted of help in seeing that funds skimmed from development loans made their way into secret bank accounts, Third World citizens were doubly exploited. In 1975 a handful of wealthy Arabs bought out the Bank of America, BCCI's lone Western investor. From that moment on the bank was a fraud, since the money the rich Arabs invested in BCCI was lent to them by BCCI.

BCCI, in other words, had no capital except for Zayed's. It employed instead a handful of front men to act the part of the investors. Their phony investments led hundreds of thousands of Third World citizens to believe that BCCI was sound and to deposit their savings in the bank. Beaty and Gwynne describe the end result succinctly: "BCCI was an entirely fictitious bank—a work of pure imagination. Deposits became capital; deposits became profits; deposits were used to cover losses and patch holes." Perhaps the central fact about BCCI was that it never really aimed to turn a profit. It ran along unchecked by the ordinary commercial concerns that rendered, say, Drexel Burnham relatively tame.

From the start the unprofitable bank tried to pry its way into the United States. And from the start American bank regulators knew enough about it to want to prevent it from succeeding. BCCI overcame this small obstacle by redeploying its wealthy Arab "investors" to serve as protective coloration, and by employing a handful of influential Americans to guide them through the back alleys of Washington. The most prominent, of course, was Clark Clifford. Both *False Profits* and *The Outlaw Bank* dredge up the almost comic mendacity with which Clifford represented his band of Arab rogues. He seems to have believed he could say anything he wanted about them provided he said it in appropriately magisterial tones. At a meeting at the Federal Reserve in April 1981, for example, he said of Kamal Adham, one of BCCI's fraudulent front men and the former head of the murderous Saudi intelligence agency, "I have come to have the deepest respect for his character, for his reputation, for his honor and for his integrity. I'm proud to be an associate of his." Clifford took to referring to Adham as "His Excellency" (he was a commoner) in his correspondence with the regulators. A couple of months later, bank regulators allowed the group of seemingly respectable Arab

University of Wisconsin
International Study Tours
India, SE Asia, Berlin, Turkey, Greece
UW-Madison Travel
610D Langdon St., Madison, WI 53703
(608) 263-2774

GOOD VIBRATIONS
Friendly, informative catalogs of sex toys, books & videos. Toys $4, Books & videos $4, Both $5 *(applied toward first order)*.
938 Howard #NR
San Francisco CA 94103



The New Criterion
A monthly review
edited by Hilton Kramer

In our June issue . . .

David Halberstam's "Fifties" *by Hilton Kramer* • "Angels in America" *by Donald Lyons* • The Barnes Foundation betrayed *by Roger Kimball* • Dreiser's "Jennie Gerhardt" *by Joseph Epstein* • Daumier at the Met *by Karen Wilkin* • Thoreau's "Faith in a seed" *by Guy Davenport* • Three poems by Eugenio Montale *translated by William Arrowsmith*

The New Criterion • 850 7th Avenue
New York, NY 10019
(212) 247-6980
$36 a year, single copy $4.75

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"investors" to acquire Financial General Bankshares of Washington, to rename it First American Bank and to appoint their attorneys, Clifford and Altman, as chairman and president, respectively.

One of the reasons the newspaper accounts of the scandal were so deeply unsatisfying was that they never really explained why it happened in the first place. The reason usually given for BCCI's expensive lunges into the United States is Abedi's implausible ambition to have BCCI become the world's largest bank by the year 2000. For BCCI to accomplish this, it required a toehold in the world's largest banking market. Once it owned an American bank it could suck deposits from America, launder drug money within the United States and further ingratiate itself by, say, offering to powerful Americans loans that they would never be required to repay. All of which it did.

Yet there is a more persuasive case that the purchase of First American—indeed, the creation of BCCI—was driven by Arab foreign policy concerns. The smoking gun here is a written account from "a former Abu Dhabi official with intimate knowledge" of the Arab purchase of First American Bank, quoted by Truell and Gurwin. The official explains in some detail that since

> having a Washington presence would mean that senators, congressmen and other government servants would bank there and would require a range of financial services ... it naturally followed over time that we would gain influence.... Because of our ownership ... we were quite comfortable, especially because we have power brokers like Clifford in place; any influence that the ruler [Sheik Zayed] needed to exercise in Washington could be done through BCCI's control of [First American].

Abedi was fond of complaining that BCCI suffered racial and ethnic discrimination whenever it attempted to do business in the West. But in fact the opposite was the case: the only color anyone in Washington noticed was the color of his money. Abedi and Clifford seemed especially made for each other. One man had a gift for turning dollars into access, the other for turning access into dollars. "What Abedi offered Clifford," write Beaty and Gwynne, "was something he already believed in: a clear and uncompromised vision of global influence, far removed from the world of nattering bureaucrats, whose strictures both men had made careers in deftly avoiding." Clifford and Altman now claim they had no idea that their bank was secretly controlled by BCCI. But the two men were attorneys to BCCI, and they met regularly with Abedi, from whom they took explicit advice about how to run First American. They never laid eyes on many of their "investors."

What is more, there is a great deal of evidence in both of these accounts that the lawyers regarded lying as simply a part of their job. Clifford himself once telephoned Beaty to dissuade him from printing that he had received more than $10 million in legal fees from BCCI. First he lied that his fees were closer to $1 million; and when that failed, he threatened the reporter with his clout. "I don't know how your magazine could allow this kind of treatment after all I've done for *Time*," he said. "After all, I've handled your problems with the postal commission for years: I think you should ask someone about that."

It is important to remember that the mendacity required for a fraudulent enterprise has something in common with the mendacity called for in more routine influence peddling. The influence peddler doesn't regard it as part of his job to inquire too closely into the motives of his clients; he adopts the legal system's conceit that everyone has a right to representation. Clifford and Altman have been thoroughly ostracized in Washington, but only so that the system itself need not be called into question. Perhaps the most amusing example of the Washington survival game was the bid by the former White House economist Michael Boskin to put some space between himself and his friend Altman. It was true, he told reporters, that the Boskins and the Altmans had twice vacationed together. But they had skied on different mountains. One can empathize with Clifford and Altman: one can understand why they are able to generate such moral outrage at their treatment. The behavior for which they are now being punished is no different in spirit from the behavior for which they were long rewarded and for which others continue to be rewarded.

Perhaps it is not surprising that Third World rulers attempt to buy influence in America in sinister, backhanded ways. But BCCI's special gift of giving people precisely what they wanted still has a certain pathological interest: it enables us to see what precisely those desires were. The price of Carter's frequent companionship, for example, was a bit more than $8 million for his charities. Tower apparently required young women from Lahore. William Casey wanted help in supplying Afghan guerrillas with weapons. And Clifford and Altman wanted to manage a bank.

In so doing, Clifford and Altman set new standards for the price of access in Washington. Beaty and Gwynne estimate that, in fees and bonuses, Clifford and Altman raked in more than $50 million from BCCI. Between July 1986 and August 1987 they borrowed about $18 million between them from BCCI to purchase shares in First American Bank. They pledged the shares against the loan, and so were never at financial risk. In February 1988 they sold the shares to a wealthy Arab with connections to BCCI for a profit of $32,773,679. The wealthy Arab who made it all possible later told a friend that "if anybody knew how dirty the Americans are in this BCCI business, they'd be surprised—they're dirtier than the Pakistanis."

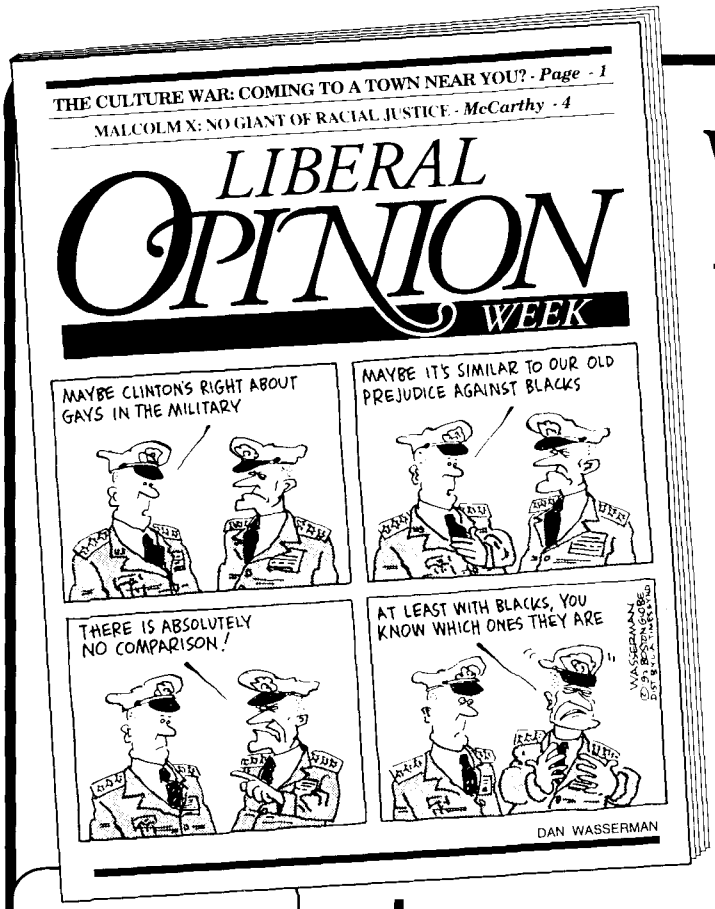
On the evidence of both these books, this would seem to be true. Clifford and Altman were insufficient by themselves to protect BCCI, though they appear to have been pretty effective in keeping key Democrats sweet. These books suggest, wrongly in my view, that their influence over Democratic legislators was due to a few small campaign contributions. Clearly a lot of people within the party simply wanted to believe that Clifford was telling the truth because it was so messy to accuse him of lying. Such is the power of being famous for who one knows.

And what about the Republicans? The CIA was aware of the true ownership of the First American Bank of Washington as early as 1985. The Justice Department had learned by 1988 not only this fact but also that BCCI was one of the great laundries in the world for drug money. Yet neither agency informed the bank regulators. Quite the contrary. They stifled one probe of the bank conducted by John Kerry's Senate subcommittee, and attempted to stifle a second conducted by the Manhattan district attorney. William Von Raab, who was the United States Customs commissioner until July 1989, explained later that the government had taken a "constant pounding" from

> influence peddlers who either had been flattered, bought or were just plain on contract to BCCI. There wasn't a single influence peddler who wasn't being used to work this case. The result was that senior U.S. policy-level officials were constantly under the impression that BCCI was probably not that bad, because all these good guys that they play golf with all the time were representing them.

It was a tribute to the care and the diligence of BCCI that some estranged party in Washington never made a stink about what everyone seemed to know but no one wanted to say. That, in the end, is why the case had to be prosecuted in Manhattan. Thus the ultimate financial scandal of the decade ended with the police in New York pursuing the crooks in Washington. How unfitting. •

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED


THE CULTURE WAR: COMING TO A TOWN NEAR YOU? - Page - 1
MALCOLM X: NO GIANT OF RACIAL JUSTICE - McCarthy - 4
LIBERAL OPINION WEEK
MAYBE CLINTON'S RIGHT ABOUT GAYS IN THE MILITARY
MAYBE IT'S SIMILAR TO OUR OLD PREJUDICE AGAINST BLACKS
THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NO COMPARISON!
AT LEAST WITH BLACKS, YOU KNOW WHICH ONES THEY ARE
DAN WASSERMAN

Will It Be as Good for You as It Was for Him?

Watch Clinton perform on sex issues.

Follow the debate on:

- gays in the military • abortion counseling
- removing HIV infection as a bar to immigration
- fetal tissue transplants
- lifting the RU-486 ban • AIDS research

Only ONE publication can give you this many liberal columnists and cartoonists every week–52 weeks a year!

FEATURED COLUMNISTS
EVERY COLUMN, EVERY WORD

Mary McGrory, Richard Cohen
Jesse Jackson, Calvin Trillin
David Broder, Coretta Scott King
Ralph Nader, Ellen Goodman
Linda Ellerbee, Mark Russell
David Nyhan, Michael Kinsley
Neal Peirce, Lars-Erik Nelson
Art Buchwald, Russell Baker
Nat Hentoff, Clarence Page
Dave Barry, Anna Quindlen
Cynthia Tucker

CONTRIBUTING COLUMNISTS
SELECTED COLUMNS WEEKLY, IN FULL

Molly Ivins, Les Payne
Andy Rooney, James Hoagland
Colman McCarthy, Robert Reno
Anthony Lewis, Mike Royko
Christopher Matthews
Carl Rowan, Germond & Witcover
Murray Kempton, William Raspberry
William Schneider, Hobart Rowen
William Pfaff, Jimmy Breslin
Jack Anderson & Michael Binstein

CONTRIBUTING CARTOONISTS

Jules Feiffer, 'Herblock'
Duane Powell, Mark Stamaty
Tom Toles, Dan Wasserman
Jeff Danziger, Steve Sack
Paul Conrad, Mike Lane
Bill Schorr, Rob Rogers
Doug Marlette, Jim Borgman
Mike Luckovich, Mike Peters
Taylor Jones

Look to ***Liberal Opinion Week*** to bring you nearly all of America's most influential liberal columnists—the pundits who will play a major role in shaping the course of the new national agenda.

In a single publication, you can follow every column, every word, of such perceptive writers as Mary McGrory, David Nyhan, David Broder, Lars-Erik Nelson, Linda Ellerbee, Michael Kinsley, Richard Cohen and Ellen Goodman.

You can also enjoy a look at the lighter side with such humorists as Dave Barry, Art Buchwald, Mark Russell, Mike Royko, Calvin Trillin and Russell Baker.

In all, ***Liberal Opinion Week*** brings you some 40 of America's finest syndicated newspaper columnists. You won't want to miss their observations and assessments.

Plus, from the drawing board you will find our lineup of editorial cartoonists including Jules Feiffer, Mark Stamaty, Tom Toles, Dan Wasserman, Jim Borgman, Mike Luckovich, 'Herblock,' Mike Peters, Paul Conrad and a host of others.

Stay informed with ***Liberal Opinion Week,*** a 32-page tabloid with no advertising.

If you are not completely satisfied, we will return a full refund on all unmailed copies at any time, for any reason.

Introductory Offer – 13 Weekly Issues for $9.75

Not available on newsstands.

TO ORDER, RETURN COUPON OR CALL **1-800-338-9335**

LIBERAL OPINION WEEK
P.O. BOX 468-B VINTON, IA 52349

☐ YES: Send a 13-week introductory subscription for $9.75
☐ Send a 1-year subscription (52 weekly issues) for $39.00

Name _____
Address _____
_____ Apt. _____
City _____
State _____ Zip _____

☐ Check enclosed
☐ Bill me ☐ VISA ☐ MC
Card # _____
Exp. _____

(Foreign postage add $25.00, $6.50 for 13-week offer.)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

New England Sphinx

By Christine Stansell

Margaret Fuller: An American Romantic Life
The Private Years
by Charles Capper

(Oxford University Press, 423 pp., $39.95)

In life and in death, Margaret Fuller called forth her contemporaries' keenest powers of articulation. Occasionally hostile but mostly loving descriptions of Fuller run along a common theme of largeness: there was something expansive, or elevating, or massive, about her presence. Emerson ironically encapsulated Fuller's character as a "rather mountainous ME." The friend who was to collaborate with him on editing her *Memoirs* turned down the job on the grounds of a similar, if more reverent, assessment of her grandness: "How can you describe a Force? How can you write the life of Margaret?"

The living Fuller inspired wonder at her power to conjure up the marvelous within the mundane, to take the occasions of daily life and turn them into something, well, transcendental. She was, an old friend mused, "a balloon of sufficient power to take us all up with her into the serene depth of heaven, where she loved to float, far above the low details of daily life." Her mind seemed boundless: "How and when did she learn about everybody that ever existed?" wondered a student at the girls' school where she taught in the mid-1830s. Few who knew her, including the ambivalent Emerson, failed to be fascinated by the question of how a person of such dimensions would make a life for herself within the circumscribed "sphere" to which her sex relegated her. How would it all turn out, a friend puzzled. "What a Sphynx is that girl! Who shall solve her."

Charles Capper's superb biography is the first full-length modern rumination on Fuller's enduring riddles. Despite some ardent feminist efforts in the past fifteen years, Fuller has remained very much a "Sphynx" veiled in mythologizing. There are several reasons. Like all the Transcendentalists except Thoreau (and perhaps Emerson), her theological and philosophical concerns prove opaque for twentieth-century readers. Perhaps even more than Emerson, Fuller's gifts were for speech more than writing, and her written work has failed to capture new audiences.

As for her place in the history of women, her very extraordinariness—what has seemed to be a life apart from other women, immersed in a male intellectual milieu—bars her from the sustained consideration granted to other antebellum heroines (such as her contemporaries Sarah and Angelina Grimké or the slightly younger Elizabeth Cady Stanton), whose biographies were bound up socially and politically with their female contemporaries. Fuller's fate was to be the token: the only woman writer on the staff of the *New York Tribune*, a solitary female expatriate making her way in revolutionary circles in Italy in 1848. Thus her reputation rests in part on the unique position that she won by sailing across the nearly unassailable sex lines of early Victorian America. This legacy of the courageous, inspirational life, however, has also grown antiquated. Capper removes Fuller from the realm of the exemplary and restores her connections to the world around her—and to readers as well.

This first of a projected two-volume work concerns the period 1810 to 1840, from Fuller's birth to her assumption of the editorship of *Dial*, the Transcendentalist organ and leading journal of the American Romantic avant-garde. She was born to an intellectually minded family in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Her father, Timothy, a lawyer and frustrated Jeffersonian politician in a stronghold of lingering Federalism, poured time, labor and severe criticism into his oldest child's education. Margaret's training in Latin at the age of 6 and her readings of Virgil, Caesar and Cicero by the age of 10 would later become critical elements of the Fuller myth, testimony both to her brilliance and to the "forcing" process, the misguided patriarchal regimen that, she suggested, nearly destroyed her childhood.

But Capper finds that Fuller's education differed from the education of many sons *and* daughters of the Boston/Cambridge intelligentsia in intensity, but not in kind. What was different for Fuller, it seems, was the avidity with which she took to the books, and the earnestness with which she incorporated at a very early age—oblivious to her destiny as a woman—her father's love of rational discourse and classical literature, and his elevation of ambition to a civic virtue.

By the time she was an adolescent, moving out onto a public stage of balls and parlor gatherings, Fuller's wit, learning and above all fabulous abilities of conversation were already creating a minor sensation. She was, as Capper pictures her, a glorious girl, "determined on distinction," as she wrote at 15, but also sought after and expansively flirtatious, awhirl in a special sort of Cambridge sociability in which adolescent erotics partook of shared theological doubts and literary passions. Her reading was encyclopedic. She devoured the novels of all of Europe, the poetry of English Romanticism, Rousseau, de Staël, the Gothicists. In addition to Latin she learned Greek, French and Italian, so that she could read in the original.

But this short moment of spirited adolescence, when childrearing practices gave free play to smart girls, vanished by the time Fuller was 20, and her peers began to settle down, the women to courtship and marriage, the men to Harvard and careers. None of her romantic entanglements resulted in proposals; and besides, she longed for something more. Hers was a culture obsessed with delineating and elaborating the supposed differences between men and women and the spheres in which they were to exercise their respective capacities. So when the girl imbued with Romantic ideals yearned for "such a person of Genius as the nineteenth century can afford," she necessarily projected the desire outward onto her male peers. As her powers unfolded, the dawning suspicion that she might be that "person of Genius" herself, if at moments exalting, was mostly painful and socially insupportable. "A man's ambition with a woman's heart—'tis an accursed lot," she reflected bitterly. The Goethian quest for the heroic path—what she termed the "remote seeking for the decrees of fate"—was to be a protracted, weary journey, always deep in the cultural shadows.

Capper skillfully guides us through this long murky period of Fuller's late adolescence and early adulthood, when she mostly stayed home, nothing much happened and she turned, in social terms, into a "spinster." She plunged into German philosophy, teaching herself the language in order to master

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

more fully the texts. In her 20s she also began to write in earnest—poetry, criticism, fiction, drama—and to publish her first articles, dense and learned, often abstruse book reviews. The sense of the uselessness of her gifts could weigh heavily. Of one such crisis she wrote, movingly: "I felt within me great power, and generosity, and tenderness; but it seemed to me as if they were all unrecognized, and as if it was impossible that they should be used in life."

In Boston's intense cognitive life, Fuller from time to time found situations in which she could exert the full authority of her temperament. But these moments were not cumulative or vocational, as they would have been for a young man discovering his talents and setting out on a career. A friend recorded a conversation with her in his diary in which she tearfully reiterated her long deferred wish for "a free sphere of activity": she spoke of "infinite capacities unsatisfied, powers unemployed and wasting, wants and burning desires unmet." In the bad times her mind took flight into the Romantic empyrean and a secularized experience of grace: "I saw that there was no self ... that it was only because I thought self real that I suffered; that I had only to live in the idea of ALL." She wanted not self-renunciation but self-transcendence, above all a release from the constraints of femininity. Capper suggests that the voluminous ALL "became a refuge from a disappointment so deep that she yearned to shake off the entirety of a female self."

Capper's mastery of the broad trans-Atlantic cerebral world in which Fuller lived is total, and he manages at once to convey the social pathos of her situation and the covert intellectual excitement. Toiling away at tutoring her younger siblings, losing months at a stretch for her writing because household duties overwhelmed her, Fuller was nonetheless hard at work reading, taking notes and gathering the avant-garde ideas and sensibility that would, in a short time, launch her into the world. But the first break from a domestic role came in the modest form of a teaching job. Her father died in 1835, leaving the family strapped for money. Emerson, whom she met the next year, introduced her to the charming and flaky radical Bronson Alcott, who needed a practical-minded assistant for his experimental Boston school.

When Alcott's school fell apart after the scandal attendant upon the publication of his *Conversations* with students—which included free-flowing meditations on "the origins of life," earning him denunciations for obscenity—Fuller moved to a Transcendentalist offshoot in Providence, to a girls' school where she assumed duties as a head teacher, offering what was essentially college-level instruction for girls (who were barred from all higher education). Here Fuller found a theater—if not an especially glamorous one—for the development of a public voice. She quickly became a commanding, skilled and inspiring, if sometimes fearsome, teacher.

One of the many services that Capper renders is to give Fuller's pedagogical career its due. Because her reputation is so dependent on her associations with powerful male intellectuals, this prosaic segment of her life has attracted little attention. In Capper's interpretation, however, these teaching years emerge as critical episodes of intellectual praxis, as Fuller sought in the classroom to bring alive the precepts of transcendental self-reliance to the high-minded daughters of the New England elite. Indeed, her full-scale debut onto a public stage was a continuation of her work as a teacher of girls. Fed up with provincial Providence and the demands of teaching, Fuller had returned to Massachusetts in 1838 and was casting about for direction and employment when Alcott suggested she hold a series of "Conversations" in Boston, a sort of running seminar for paying participants.

The gender conventions of the time militated against a woman appearing in public before mixed audiences: the Grimké sisters had incurred the wrath of the New England clergy two years earlier for lecturing to crowds of men and women on the abolition of slavery. Fuller seems never to have thought of including men, nor did she see the enterprise as any the less for only including women. Rather, she conceived of her task in a characteristically grand way. She would precipitate a new kind of feminine collectivity joined in intellectual rather than domestic, familial or sentimental ties. The women would address themselves, she decided, to "the great questions": "What were we born to do? How shall we do it?"

Like many of Fuller's ideas, the project now sounds vague and overblown. But Capper translates brilliantly, here and elsewhere, such billowy sentiments into social meaning. What Fuller wanted, he maintains, was to extract the Romantic ideal of the self united in thought and action from its embeddedness in a public world of male enterprise and apply it to the alien realm of feminine culture, sodden with literary sentiment, domesticity and the palliatives of women's special "influence."

It's good to think of Fuller in Boston talking week after week, every Wednesday at midday for five years, on the "great questions" to a roomful of women eventually numbering more than 100. It's even better to think of her earning hefty fees, two-thirds those of Emerson, a remuneration virtually unthinkable for a woman at the time. Like her Transcendentalist compatriots, her fluid conversational style sought to mimic deeper spiritual truths that couldn't be fixed in the frozen wordings of written texts. The imperative to pontificate must have been strong. Certainly the conversations provided an arena for Fuller to constitute herself as the epitome of feminine possibility, the living embodiment of the "Woman of the Nineteenth Century" about whom she would later write.

But Fuller was a principled cultural radical, not a self-promoter, and she used her first public forum as an arena for intellectual action. So while she came into her own as the first female "American scholar," she also reached her pitch as a fine teacher. One catches glimpses of a patient pedagogue at work, letting loose streams of speech, pausing to let her students catch up, then lying in wait to pounce on a listener's half-formed thought that might serve as a link to her own.

The conversations implicitly rejected the authoritarian approach of the minister or lecturer toward his congregation or audience. Fuller was seeking a more democratic method. "Everyone wanted to pay homage," a male visitor reported, but Fuller refused to accede and "threw back the ball of conversation, so as to start this listener or that." Students praised "her extreme candor & tenderness to every feeblest expression of opinion from any member." Even Fuller, usually her own worst critic, swelled with her success. "My class is singularly prosperous I think," she told a friend, with a teacher's wary pleasure at the mysterious alchemy of the classroom. "I was so fortunate as to rouse at once the tone of simple earnestness which can scarcely, when once awakened, cease to vibrate.... All seem in a glow and quite as receptive as I wish."

Her students were highly educated, intellectually ardent women—religiously liberal, multilingual and well-read in classical and modern literature. Some developed incipient ties to abolitionism, others to Fourierism. All embraced the Transcendentalist belief in the necessity of breaking from a complacent and derivative intellectual culture to devote oneself to self-discovery. How to discover a self was quite a problem, given the constricted circumstances of their lives; the process was necessarily cerebral and psychological, and one path seems to have

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

been through identification with their reigning female "genius."

That Fuller was able, in the uncompromising circumstances of early Victorian New England, to invent herself as a public personage is due in good measure to this submerged female avant-garde, which welcomed and required such a figure. Her ascendancy alone threw the notion that women might have some other profession besides domesticity into the earnest reckonings of Boston, that paradigmatic "city of notions." "She spoke upon what women could do—said she should like to see a woman every thing she might be, in intellect and character"—and as she called for this project, she also enacted it for the women around her.

Fuller was (this is one of the book's surprises) a fabulously social person. The legend of the brilliant but forlorn spinster, the ridiculed eccentric, has worked to dissociate her from the hive of social activity in which she spent all her New England years. Her omnivorousness for friendship—you could even call it promiscuity—vexes the categories of a social history founded on the precept that women lived their lives in a separate "female world of love and ritual," to use Carroll Smith-Rosenberg's phrase. This was a society, to be sure, obsessed with dividing the sexes. One of Capper's principle themes, woven firmly and delicately throughout, is the power of idealized—and ideological—femininity to constrain a thinker who felt most herself when she was soaring in the ostensibly gender-neutral reaches of the Spirit and the Soul.

Even when she basked in the loving regard of friends, she was lucky if she escaped her gendered self—a sexual identity construed as a handicap—for a minute. "She is given to free and bold speculation," Alcott delightfully paid tribute, and continued with the required modifier: "and has more unity of mind, than most of her sex." She seemed "more inclined to take large and generous views of subjects," he added, "than any women of my acquaintance." For those more privy to her troubles, the contiguity of the universalist mind with the sexed social being occasioned sadder reflections. A close male friend began a diary entry with a hymn to her powers, then interjected darkly: "Yet what is the effect of these powers. She is not happy—it all ends in nothing.... Why was she a woman?"

But despite the compulsions of segregated political, economic and educational systems, there was continual social and intellectual concourse between the men and women of Boston's elite. Fuller buzzed around among women and men friends and intimates, romantic interests who were men and possibly women, too, Harvard professors, Emersons and Alcotts, her siblings and Transcendentalists, her students and her "Conversation" partners. Romantic friendship seems to be one elevated realm that remained open to girls as they grew into women, and Fuller found these relationships a place to exercise both her intelligence and artistry.

She had a genius for friendship, her intimates believed, an ability to recreate a companion's life in more deeply colored hues: "all her friends will unite in the testimony that ... they have never seen one who, like her, by the conversation of an hour or two, could not merely entertain and inform, but make an epoch in one's life." Acute to the register of feeling in such high-flown nineteenth-century prose, Capper notes that these "high-pitched tones" could be burdensome, but adds that Fuller also "devoted—daily, weekly, year after year—enormous amounts of *prosaic* energy to her friends: counseling them, instructing them and generally catering, often in tender and painstaking ways, to their various personal needs and concerns."

Intellectual history has customarily cared little for everyday life, interesting itself rather in the lineages of ideas and their unfolding in the abstract reaches of the mind. From such a perspective, the signifying moments in Fuller's development were her engagements with the great tradition of male intellection: her study of the classics under her father's direction, her absorption of Goethe, her complicated friendship with Emerson. Capper certainly pays full tribute to these involvements. He is a master of intellectual genealogies and of the finely hewn debates and fierce contestation they spawned, and he conveys eloquently the living presence of the life of the mind.

Indeed, in his hands Fuller's New England, in its own gentle, hyperarticulated way, recalls the high intellectual drama of twentieth-century radical New York intellectuals. For all its gentility, it was, he insists, a place where by the late 1830s "lines were being drawn" by a generation Emerson described as "born with knives in their brain." There were left-wing Transcendentalists and right-wing Transcendentalists, centrist Goethians and radical Goethians, accommodationists, fellow travelers and crazy people, political Romanticists and aesthetic Romanticists, facing off in journals, pulpits and parlors, all coalescing into a contentious avant-garde of cultural radicalism.

But Capper achieves this sense of high intellectual drama by departing from charts of lineages and influences to evoke the social resonance of ideas: how they picked up speed and hummed in the exchanges so thick in Fuller's everyday life. The precepts and the methods of Transcendentalism, cloudy to modern minds, take on interest and urgency when we consider, for example, how Fuller employed them to change the lives of middle-class women. Her lectures on Greek mythology in the "Conversations," for example, drew on her vast knowledge of German scholarship to illustrate, outside the bounds of familiar theological debates, how the classical tales symbolized the "deep ... intellectual and aesthetic life" that Transcendentalism summoned up: culture not as wealth or status but as invention, play, spirit.

This volume of Capper's biography concludes with the first issue of *Dial* about to appear and Fuller poised for a longed-for ascension to professional authorship. The next ten years of her life would be crammed with achievements, personal and professional: *Dial*, travel, books, a substantial body of journalism, a deep engagement with Mazzini and the Revolution of 1848 in Italy, a happy love affair and the birth of a beloved child. If the fullness of her life in these years confounded her detractors' sense that it was bound to turn out badly, the end did not: she, her Italian husband and her 2-year-old drowned in a shipwreck off Fire Island on their return to America in 1850, a cruel death that has nonetheless provided for generations of Fuller's fans a pleasingly tragic closure to the heroine's tale. There is even a suspicion that Fuller drowned herself, that she chose a sensational death with her European family over a solitary return to a supposedly unappreciative America. Fuller was a European *manquée*, this version of the story goes, who knew in her heart that only the Continent could sustain a woman of her heterodox and brilliant sensibility.

Capper's next volume will necessarily concern the legend of the brilliant outcast returning to seek her due. But for the moment, he leaves us with a very different image of Fuller as entirely and profoundly American, her gifts cultivated and nourished on a native ground where "such a person of genius as the nineteenth century can afford" encountered and in turn fostered, in the life of the American mind and the American parlor, keen visions of human possibilities, not least among them the possibilities of Woman.

CHRISTINE STANSELL teaches American history and women's studies at Princeton University and is writing a book about politics, sex and modernism in the early twentieth century.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

How to Be Religious Without Losing Your Mind

Among the well-educated the myth still circulates that religion is the preserve of the dim-witted, unlettered, and irrational, that the price of salvation is checking your mind at the Pearly Gates. Yet, from Harvard to Berkeley, and among inquisitive people generally, there's an undeniable renewal of interest in the questions traditional religion raises and seeks to answer. This fascination is largely the result of the failure of secular substitutes for religion (such as positivism, rationalism, hedonism, consumerism, technological utopianism, Freudianism, and Marxism) to give abidingly satisfying answers to the truly significant puzzles in life: evil, goodness, suffering, love, death, and the meaning of it all.

Contrary to stereotypes, this religious renaissance does not imply a retreat from working for peace, justice, and human dignity; nor does it signify a hostility to science, only an appreciation of the limits of science and technology.

We at the NEW OXFORD REVIEW are spearheading today's intellectual engagement with the sacred. Among other things, we scrutinize the religious dimensions of the great events and issues of the past and present, and probe the wisdom offered not only by the Bible and Church fathers, but also by such giants as St. Francis, Aquinas, Dante, Kierkegaard, Newman, Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, Bonhoeffer, Barth, Niebuhr, Gandhi, Buber, Auden, Eliot, Silone, Maritain, Merton, Schumacher, Thomas More, Dorothy Day, C.S. Lewis, Martin Luther King, Flannery O'Connor, Mother Teresa, and Archbishops Romero and Tutu.

An ecumenical monthly edited by lay Catholics, we've been characterized by George Will as "splendid," by the University of Chicago's Martin E. Marty as "lively," by the *Los Angeles Times* as "influential," by *Newsweek* as "thoughtful and often cheeky," by *Utne Reader* as "surprisingly original," by *Library Journal* as "brilliant," and by Christopher Derrick, England's foremost Catholic apologist, as "by far the best Catholic magazine in the English-speaking world."

We publish Protestants, Catholics, Anglicans, Eastern Orthodox, Jews, and an occasional nonbeliever. Writers who've appeared in our pages include such diversely penetrating intellects as Robert Bellah, Christopher Lasch, Jean Bethke Elshtain, Daniel Bell, Robert Coles, Irving Howe, Walker Percy, Norman Lear, John Lukacs, J.M. Cameron, Henri Nouwen, Avery Dulles, Gordon Zahn, Will Campbell, Stanley Hauerwas, Richard Mouw, and Sheldon Vanauken. We bat around a wide variety of issues and defy easy ideological pigeonholing. We'll keep you on your toes!

Whether or not you're Catholic, if you yearn for a sane, intelligent, and nonglitzy exploration of the religious dimensions of our lives and our world, we invite you to get to know us.

(Please allow 2 to 8 weeks for delivery of first issue)

SPECIAL DISCOUNT RATES FOR FIRST-TIME SUBSCRIBERS

- ☐ One-year subscription. . . . . .$14 (regularly $19)
- ☐ One-year student, unemployed, or retired person's subscription . . . . . .$12 (regularly $16)
- ☐ Two-year subscription . . . . .$23 (regularly $35)
- ☐ One-year Canadian or foreign subscription . . . . US$17 (regularly $22) Payment must be drawn in US Dollars
- ☐ Sample copy. $3.50

NAME (Please print or type)

STREET ADDRESS

CITY STATE ZIP CODE

Send coupon or letter. Make check payable to NEW OXFORD REVIEW. Mail to:

NEW OXFORD REVIEW
Room 374
1069 Kains Ave.
Berkeley, CA 94706

PAYMENT MUST ACCOMPANY ORDER

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Shadow Plays

By Wendy Lesser

Eclipse Fever by Walter Abish

(Knopf, 326 pp., $23)

For most of his career, Walter Abish has been one of those purposely irritating writers who welcome the label "experimental." His books declared, in everything from design to content, their expectation of a small, rigorously select audience. Rejecting the term "story" (which implies that most suspect of middlebrow elements, a plot), Abish instead called his shorter works "fictions." He favored arbitrary and noticeably literary devices, as in one of his early "novels," *Alphabetical Africa* (1974), which consists of fifty-one chapters titled from A to Z and back to A, each chapter relying heavily on words containing the designated letter. "X stands for experimental," one such chapter begins, "and for excretion, that is for plain shit on the trail." The critic is tempted to add: Exactly.

And then, in 1980, came a breakthrough, a sudden transformation. *How German Is It* was Abish's gesture in the direction of a wider readership. In contrast to the fragmented and alienated word clusters that he previously produced, it contained distinct characters, several plots and a protagonist that you could practically identify with. Set in contemporary Germany, the novel reflected persuasively and intelligently on the postwar German mood of denial, with its superficial emphasis on material success and its underbelly of revolutionary politics.

How German Is It was visibly linked to Abish's earlier work—the title and part of the setting, for instance, came straight out of a story called "The English Garden," published in his collection *In the Future Perfect* (1977)—but it represented the first time that he had been able to harness his characteristic tricks and tics in the service of a meaningful plot. This, it seemed, was the novel that Abish had been preparing to write all those years, the sources of its authorial irritation now *real* and not merely literary, its imperfections and repetitions justified—more than justified—by the apt criticism of German society they conveyed. *How German Is It* is a minor masterpiece.

Now, thirteen years later, comes *Eclipse Fever*, another readable novel, if perhaps a less permanently valuable one. It marks Abish's belated departure from the avant-garde ghetto, his sudden eligibility for reviews in mainstream periodicals. It can almost be read as a straightforward corporate-conspiracy thriller. To the readers of the highly convoluted *Alphabetical Africa*, this turn of events would have been inconceivable. It's as if James Joyce had followed up *Ulysses* not with *Finnegans Wake*, but with *The Ministry of Fear* and then *Our Man in Havana*.

Eclipse Fever is set mainly in Mexico during the period surrounding the recent total eclipse, which remains an offstage presence toward which events move and around which they finally slither, leaving the eclipse itself ideal, inviolate, undescribed. The central character is a Mexican intellectual, a critic named Alejandro, who is married to the beautiful, probably unfaithful Mercedes; much of the novel consists of Alejandro's imaginings of the suspected affair between Mercedes and a well-known American novelist, Jurud. Woven in with this personal story of betrayal is a political story about the devious machinations of an American corporation, Eden Enterprises, which has plans for Mexico that include construction of an elevator in the historic Pyramid of the Sun. Eden is run by Preston Hollier, whose wife, Rita, is having an affair with Alejandro's best friend, Francisco. The two plots are finally welded together in the person of Bonny, Jurud's runaway teenage daughter, who travels to Mexico with a shady character named Emilio in order to witness the eclipse, and who instead ends up witnessing a murder.

Abish has always been obsessed with geography, with the possibilities of travel, with the foreignness of foreign countries. A refugee himself (his parents fled Austria for Shanghai in 1940, when he was 9), he is a veritable Displaced Person of literature. No language is natural to him; every language is a screen, a means for artifice. He is a master of the *unheimlich*, the un-homey, not so much in the sense of "uncanny" as in the sense of "unfamiliar"—literally, the familiar made strange. Only through purposeful alienation can his characters escape the snares of daily life. Thus the main character of *How German Is It*, a writer named Ulrich Hargenau, concludes a conversation with his brother, Helmuth, "feeling trapped by the unbearably familiar exchange. Trapped by the language that seemed to guide his thoughts, his responses. Oh, to live somewhere where they spoke a language he could not understand." Abish has made the adoption of such a language the key to his technique. He can be criticized on a superficial level for odd diction and awkward sentence construction, but at a deeper level these tactics work to heighten the sense that he *and* his characters are interestingly uncomfortable in their world.

And yet, especially in *Eclipse Fever*, the effect is sometimes the opposite of alienation. Displacement, yes; but not distance. Time and again, reading descriptions of Alejandro's conversations with his editor, his visits to favorite coffeehouses with friends, his negotiations about television appearances, I caught myself thinking, so *this* is what it feels like to be a Mexico City intellectual, *this* is the inside view of what I normally see only from the outside, as a tourist or a reader of fiction, and then I would remember that Walter Abish is no more a Mexico City intellectual than I am. But he has the capacity to persuade us that he is, just as in *How German Is It* he seemed absolutely to inhabit the life of the West German writer.

It is possible to read *Eclipse Fever* on its own, with no reference to Abish's earlier works. But to those familiar with his previous books, the new novel becomes a richer and stranger thing. However much you may tend to judge novels on the basis of plot and character, *Eclipse Fever*, when seen against the background of its predecessors, forces you to appreciate it on more formal grounds. Like *How German Is It*, it had its genesis in a short story, "Parting Shot." The story is about Maude, the daughter of a famous writer, a man who writes "big fat American books" that are read "in the hundred thousands." Though her father routinely cannibalizes her life for his books, even going so far as to use the most personal details of her marital sex life, Maude remains willfully ignorant of his strategy until it is called to her attention:

> Are you aware, Gregory had told Maude shortly after they were married, that all the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> women in your father's novels are an exact replica of you.... If not for Gregory she would still be reading her father's novels without a clue as to the identity of his female characters.

And now, in *Eclipse Fever*, we find that Bonny has exactly the same relation to Jurud: "If not for Tim's readerly insight, how would she have known that in one guise or another she appeared in each one of her father's novels?"

To locate such correspondences is not just to pick up the clues in Abish's private treasure hunt (an admittedly unsatisfactory pursuit, for there is "plain shit on the trail," as Abish himself admits). It is to discover the deep chasms of obsession that run through this seemingly accessible book. *Eclipse Fever* appears to be that thing Abish's characters are always hoping for: a clean break with the past. But memory and language, those enemies of the clean break, keep dragging it back to its origins. The new novel could almost be continuous with its predecessor: *How German Is It* ends with Ulrich in hypnosis, seeking out his childhood memories, whereas *Eclipse Fever* begins, "Was it true the critic had no past to speak of? That the little there was had to be extracted with agonizing difficulty from the void that marked his early years?" The Mercedes and the Rita of the earlier book (a car and a mistress, respectively) have been transformed into wives for this one; the setting has been changed, and some of the avant-garde tics eliminated. But the differences only emphasize the willed strangeness of the similarity.

In his new novel, Abish (a former urban planner) gives us a building that metaphorically connects his last two books. Describing a symphony hall in Mexico City that is the replica of one in Germany, he says:

> Unlike its Mexican twin, the unconventionally shaped golden Berlin Philharmonic Hall, erected on what had been an area devastated by the war, was initially perceived even by its friendliest critics as aesthetically at odds with Berlin's formerly rich architectural history, whereas the Brazilian architect's oddly shaped creation for Mexico City was immediately accepted as an anomaly only the Aztecs or their unknown precursors might have created in a moment of aberrational bloodletting inspiration.

Abish understands exactly the extent to which displacement can bring about a strong but unwarranted sense of familiarity.

And yet familiarity is finally what he most resists. The repetitions of phrase and image and character, both among and within Abish's works, are not signposts to guide us to his meaning; they are introduced with the intent to complicate. "Sometimes he felt as if his brain had become addicted to repetitions," Abish says of Ulrich in *How German Is It*, "needing to hear everything repeated once, then twice in order to be certain that the statement was not false or misleading ... even though he would be the first to acknowledge that repetition precluded the attainment of perfection." But perfection, at least in that earlier novel, is something that Abish very self-consciously renounces; he associates it with the German passion for efficiency and smoothness, with the German need to eliminate the problematic—with, in short, the Final Solution.

In *Eclipse Fever* there is no similar justification, no necessary link between stylistic repetition and authorial meaning. But then, there is far less overt repetition in this novel. What takes its place is a shadowy echo of something that isn't actually there—the penumbra, so to speak, around a totally eclipsed sun. Behind the mainly conventional presentation of an understandable plot lies a wealth of implicit references to Abish's long-held obsessions: his strangely detached view of sex, his sense of how authors cannibalize lives, his perceptions about troubled father-daughter relations, the connections that he draws between geography and alienation, his interest in buildings and other structures, his repetition compulsion and so on. By this means, the prickly exclusiveness of Abish's earlier work—his insistence on not being one of those "friendly" American authors who write big fat books for the hundred thousands—has been converted, in *Eclipse Fever*, into a sly but nonetheless affectionate inclusiveness aimed at his old core of readers. That conspiratorial feeling, shadowy as it is, lends a special richness to the opening epigraph from *Alice in Wonderland*, which reads in part:

> My notion was that you had been
> (Before she had this fit)
> An obstacle that came between
> Him, and ourselves, and it.
> Don't let him know she liked them best,
> For this must ever be
> A secret, kept from all the rest,
> Between yourself and me.

This, for readers of his work to date, is an apt description of the trail that led from the X-word to *Eclipse Fever*. Abish's literary history is the story of how an obstacle can become a secret link—of how a "fit" can be both the solipsistic performance of a mad person and the hand-in-glove union between author and reader.

WENDY LESSER, the editor of *The Threepenny Review*, is the author of *His Other Half: Men Looking at Women through Art* (Harvard University Press).

Mint

It looked like a clump of small dusty nettles
Growing wild at the gable of the house
Beyond where we dumped our refuse and old bottles:
Unverdant ever, almost beneath notice.

But, to be fair, it also spelled promise
And newfangledness in the yard of our life
As if something callow yet tenacious
Sauntered in green alleys and grew rife.

The snip of scissor blades, the light of Sunday
Mornings when the mint was cut and loved:
My last things will be first things slipping from me.
Yet let all things go free that have survived.

Let the smells of mint go heady and defenceless
Like inmates liberated in that yard.
Like the disregarded ones we turned against
Because we'd failed them by our disregard.

SEAMUS HEANEY

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

WASHINGTON DIARIST

Regret

I HAVE TWO THEORIES ABOUT Bill Clinton's postelection plunge, one borrowed, one furiously retained against mounting opposition. The first was proffered by someone on background deeper even than David Dreyer's who knows Clinton well. It's that the man is best described as a congenital adolescent. He tries on a new identity each day, as adolescents do, in order to see how it fits; and as each one fails to satisfy his hormone-driven attention span, he dumps it for another. The only stable forces in the postpubescent's life are his buddies, the gang he hangs out with. These are the people he rewarded with all the plum jobs and who are friends with his best friend of all, Hillary. Hence the haphazard policy lurches from neo to paleo to neo-paleo; the somewhat frantic attempts to remake himself; and the periodic recourse to various authority figures, such as Warren Christopher and Vernon Jordan. It also explains the sudden availing of the spoils of office, from Christophe's haircuts to Sharon Stone. What, after all, does the 17-year-old do who's just gotten the run of the White House? He orders out.

MY OTHER THEORY IS A VERSION of the Rhodes Scholar Loser Rule. A few years back I offered *Spy* magazine readers the following bit of wisdom: "In fact, the Oval Office will probably never be occupied by a Rhodes Scholar. How come? Because no other Rhodie has ever done it, so it must not be a thing Rhodes scholars do; because the presidency is not appointive; because it's a job with a huge amount of real responsibility; because a president can't just write editorials or position papers or head up committees—he or she has to *decide things*; because if you were president, you could never hope to put anything better on your résumé, and because that, to a Rhodes scholar, is tantamount to death." In the last few months a few enterprising souls have called me up to rub my nose in that particular piece of failed punditry, but as the months go by, I think I'll stick with the original point. Sure, Clinton became president, but not without seeing his entire Rhodie persona go through a meltdown. It turns out that since the election, Clinton *has* experienced something "tantamount to death." The "huge amount of real responsibility" was something for which he was completely unequipped. The requirement to "*decide things*" proved horrifying. His presidential policy statements, insofar as they qualify as such, sound like an overly prepared Rhodes candidate at a regional interview or exactly the kind of position papers and editorials Rhodies are so good at: full of general, often contradictory principles, all of which are liable to change depending on the book he read last. Once the oath of office had been uttered, the arcane skill of sucking up, which is the archetypal characteristic of Rhodes scholars, was suddenly rendered irrelevant by the lack of any superior up whom to suck. Governing—which in a democracy is often the contrived art of sucking down—turned out to be an experience for which Clinton, despite his many years as governor of Arkansas, was lamentably unprepared. In retrospect, even his governorship looks more and more like an elaborate Rhodie effort to suck up to the party establishment, even to the point of kitting himself out with carefully marketed DLC policy proposals and that résumé burnisher of standing up to the teachers' unions in Arkansas. If this analysis holds, there is no knowing where the terrifying story may end. The only further piece of wisdom I feel confident enough to impart is: don't trust David Boren either.

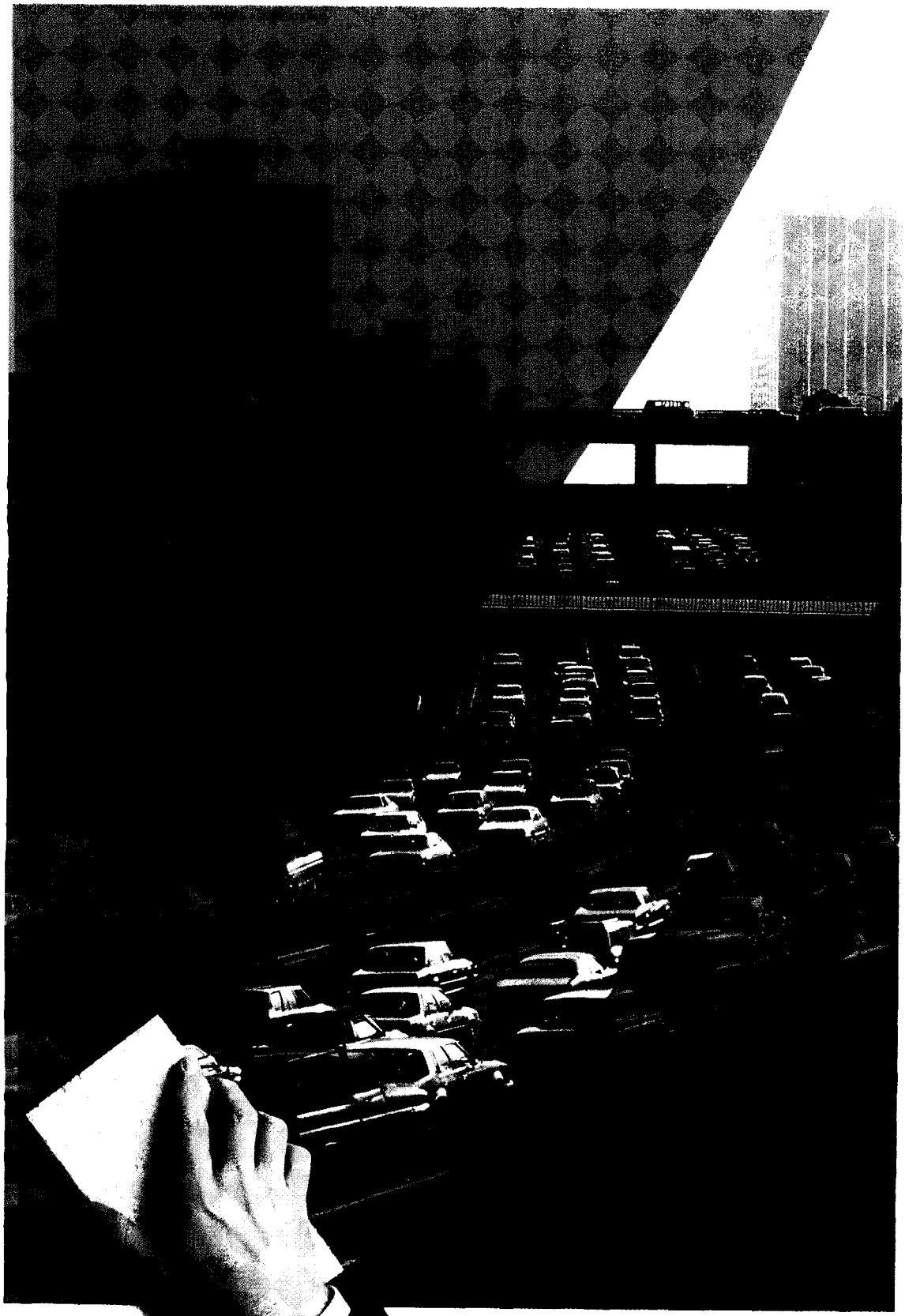
THE WEEKEND BEFORE LAST, I went to New York to see the much heralded play *Angels in America,* which occupied a good deal of our correspondence section last week. Maybe I was expecting too much (and I've yet to see the second part), but on close inspection, it was a crushing disappointment. Regardless of the production ("intimate and epic ... blood-churning performances ... the most thrilling American play in years"—*The New York Times*), the script itself never ascended, so far as I could tell, above a West Village version of Neil Simon. Its pretensions to universalism—pre-Raphaelite angels descending on dying Manhattanites; an exploding hallucinogenic Torah; a valiumized housewife in the Antarctic; Roy Cohn as cartoonish Vaudevillian—were so contrived that only the kind of Londoners who congratulate themselves on the Rosenberg references could mistake them for profundity. The dialogue was funny in a lower-Chelsea kind of way, its sassy observations about the self-satirization of gay, Jewish New Yorkers obviously drawn from experience. But gay life—and gay death—surely awaits something grander and subtler than this. Its relentless contemporaneity (circa 1985) made it seem far more dated than the best Joe Orton. Most depressing of all was the way the press appeared so careful to avoid what seemed to me (and everyone I went with) a pretty easy call, treading around gay sensibility as if criticism of a subculture in a health crisis was somehow a breach of social etiquette. This kind of preciousness is something homosexual artists would once have eviscerated mercilessly; now it's something they almost plead for. It's a sad commentary on the relentless advance of gay victimology. With the hyping of *Angels,* we've arrived at a celebration of the ultimate icon of multicultural sensitivity: the witless homosexual.

THE RECENT DEATH BY SUICIDE of John Wilson, chairman of the D.C. City Council, was troubling not simply for the loss of one of the country's most effective black politicians, but because of the illness from which he suffered. Plenty has been written about the stigma of AIDS in our culture; not enough about the stigma of mental illness. Washington, where denial comes naturally, is a place where the stigma is perhaps deepest of all. There's plenty we'll tolerate in a politician: inconsistency, shallowness, lechery, hypocrisy, even thievery. But any hint of depression of the kind that requires medication or even simple therapy, and the person is required to exempt himself from high public office, or keep his disease an oppressive, destructive secret. I'm not saying public officials should spend their time sharing their pain, Clinton-like, but rather that there should be less oppressive a taboo against discussion of depression, and more of an attempt to see its treatment in the same way we see the treatment of other ailments. The stricture against honesty not only exacts more pain on those who are already suffering, but actually denies us people in office who might actually react intelligently to the world around them. There are many virtues one might look for in a leader, but in these times, a capacity for sadness is surely one of them.

ANDREW SULLIVAN

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Don't you wish we could just do this to air pollution.



In a way we can—because cars and trucks that run on natural gas reduce the emissions that cause smog by 80%—and virtually eliminate soot.

The fact is, natural gas is the cleanest burning alternative fuel available today.

And the least expensive.

30% less expensive per mile than gasoline.

Because it's so clean, natural gas also cuts maintenance costs. Oil changes and tune-ups are cut in half, and there is less engine wear.

Small wonder that there are thousands of natural gas cars and trucks on America's roads today.

With more being built by Chrysler, Ford, and General Motors every day.

If all fleet owners—companies and communities—across the country would switch to natural gas as they replace cars and trucks, it would really make a difference in our air.

A breathtaking difference.

Clean, economical natural gas. Think what we'll save.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

For five years, American workers have built Mitsubishi's best-selling cars.

Beginning this summer, the all-new 1994 Galant will accelerate that trend.

Since 1988, Mitsubishi's best-selling car in the U.S. market has been the U.S. built Eclipse.

The all-new Galant is now being built by 2,500 UAW workers at the same site as the Eclipse – our Diamond-Star plant in Normal, Illinois. It will go on sale in a few weeks.

We expect it to be just as successful and widely acclaimed as the Eclipse has been. A chief reason for our optimism is the car's high quality standards.

Diamond-Star workers are proving themselves stellar once again.

MITSUBISHI
CREATING TOGETHER™

The New Thinking in Automobiles™

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED